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TOWARDS FREEDOM

Documents
on the Movement
for Independence
in India

1939

Part 2

edited by
Mushirul Hasan

TOWARDS FREEDOM

Documents on the Movement for Independence in India, 1939 Part 2

The *Towards Freedom* volumes, each edited by a distinguished scholar, bring together historical materials relating to the period 1937–47 from a wide variety of sources—official records, private and organizational papers, newspapers, and other contemporary publications available within the country. It presents, documents relating to the activities, attitudes, and ideas of diverse classes and sections of Indian society, all of which contributed to the attainment of independence with partition.

This volume systematically covers the major sociopolitical developments during 1939. Part I of the volume covers the 1937 elections, World War II, Kisan Sabhas, and Princely India. In continuation Part II explores, among other things, workers' struggles, strikes and their organizations in different parts of India. Congress organizations, and especially the correspondence between Gandhi, Bose, and Nehru constitute the chapter on nationalist politics. The subsequent chapter records the activities of the Left parties, their organizations, and blocks within them. The final chapter traces the trends of communal and sectarian politics of the time.

A unique resource, this volume presents unpublished documents from the national and state archives and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, as well as extracts from English newspapers. It sheds light on various aspects of anti-colonial resistance in British and Princely India, socio-cultural movements and legislations, peasant agitations, and subaltern movements.

The General Editor's Preface for the *Towards Freedom* series provides the context and focus.

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Towards Freedom

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ICHR: Towards Freedom

General Editor

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

Volume Editor

Mushirul Hasan

Towards Freedom

Documents on the Movement for Independence in India
1939

PART 2

Edited by
Mushirul Hasan

With a Preface by the General Editor
Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

Indian Council of Historical Research

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Contents

<i>General Editor's Preface</i>	vii
<i>Editor's Introduction</i>	xix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xxv
<i>Calendar of Documents</i>	xxvii
5. WORKERS' STRUGGLES	981
6. NATIONAL POLITICS (NATIONALIST)	1165
7. NATIONAL POLITICS (LEFTIST)	1472
8. COMMUNAL (AND SECTARIAN) POLITICS	1741
<i>Index</i>	1958



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General Editor's Preface

The agenda of an endeavour such as this series of volumes defines itself in part through editorial practice and partly through attempts towards a statement of objectives. The historical context in which this project developed initially is generally known. While it will be excessively deterministic to overestimate the influence of that historical conjuncture on the academic inputs which went into the making of the project's agenda, one has to take that into account as one of the formative factors. After the vertiginous years leading to 1947, there came a time when historians turned their attention to those years and archives began to acquire and provide access to source materials. The last years of 'British India' began to be addressed by professional historians and indeed the theme attracted national attention both in India and in Britain. In June 1967, the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson made an important statement in this regard in the House of Commons: 'in view of the great interest now being shown in historical circles in the last days of British rule in India', there would be published 'documents from the India Office records on the Transfer of Power and the events leading up to it.'¹ The announcement included the assurance that 'the editors will be independent historians who will be given unrestrained access to the records, and freedom to select and edit the documents for publication.' The outcome of the project thus framed at the highest level in England was the series known as *The Transfer of Power* edited by Nicholas Mansergh, Smuts Professor of the History of the British Commonwealth at Cambridge. In addition to the announcement made in Parliament, Mansergh, as 'the Editor-in-Chief', stated that the 'purpose of the series' was 'to make available to scholars in convenient printed form the more important British historical records relating to the transfer of power in India'.²

Arguably, there is an obvious inadequacy in the notion that all that happened in 1947 was a 'transfer of power'. In Indian perception the attainment of Independence was a significant moment in the history of the struggle against British rule in the subcontinent. The representation of the emergence of independent India and Pakistan as transfer of power, solely an alteration of constitutional relations, tended towards the occlusion of that history. The focus on the legalistic notion of power transfer and the discourse of modalities of transfer, marginalized the more significant part of the historical processes at work. Likewise, the self-imposed limitations of the British documentation enterprise left many issues unaddressed: the project was to select documents from British state papers relating to the constitutional arrangements from the Cripps Mission of 1942 to 15 August 1947. In that discourse, in the official archives and the Viceroy's papers the Indian voice was recorded only in so far as a few important spokesmen of political parties were among those present in negotiations with the British Indian government. The Indian institutions, personalities and events were included in the documentation only to the extent the official papers took cognizance of them.

¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, House of Commons, Vol. 749, 30 June 1967, cols. 147–48.

² Nicholas Mansergh, ed. 'Foreword' *The Transfer of Power*, London, 1976, Vol. VI, p. viii.

That is not to say that the task of documentation in the twelve volumes produced between 1970 and 1983 by the HMSO was not competently handled by Professor Mansergh and his editorial assistants. These volumes were products of the best of British scholarship. But the initial conception of the project was delimited to certain issues and historical sources. I recall that in 1971 when I invited Sir Penderel Moon, a brilliant officer of the Indian Civil Service and later a member of Mansergh's editorial team, to a seminar at St Antony's College, Oxford, a number of us questioned him about this and he pointed out that perhaps we had not paid attention to the subtitle of the Mansergh volumes, 'Constitutional Relations between Britain and India'. Clearly the agenda for any Indian endeavour towards the documentation of the years leading to independence in 1947 would be different. How it would be different was suggested by Professor Sarvepalli Gopal in a luminous editorial Preface to the first volume produced under the present project. He said that the projected volumes aimed to 'present, within limits set by the sources, documents relating to the activities, attitudes and ideas of the diverse classes and sections of Indian society, all of which contributed to the attainment of Indian independence with partition.'³

It is significant that the title chosen for this series was 'Towards Freedom'. While the sub-title emphasizes the focus upon the 'movement for independence', the title evokes discourses in other domains as well—the struggle for social justice, for economic empowerment against exploitation, and for cultural autonomy. These were also prominent discourses within the over-arching framework of the Indian people's struggle for freedom. One is reminded of the words of Mahatma Gandhi in an essay he wrote in the *Harijan* a few days before his death, on 27 January 1948: 'the Congress has won political freedom but it has yet to win economic freedom, social and moral freedom.'⁴ This awareness of different categories of freedom allows space for a conception of the freedom struggle far wider in amplitude than the textbook approach to the struggle for independence from British rule. It makes a struggle for freedoms of many kinds thinkable. And it broadens the idea of a history of freedom struggle. This is how I understand the choice of the title for this series: *Towards Freedom*.

To sum it up, the present series of volumes focuses upon not just the legal processes of the transfer of power and the overtly political activities which brought that about, but also the struggle for freedom in different domains—economic, social, and cultural. The agenda of the series, therefore, is open to the entry of themes relating to the struggle of the peasantry, the working classes, and different sections of people as well as to a broad spectrum of political organizations who in their own light worked towards attainment of freedom.

To any one interested in the craft of history a pertinent question will be how the documentation will reflect this agenda. The selection of appropriate documents is not an easy task. We are here looking at long term historical processes such as the slowly evolving ideas about nationhood or class solidarity, the dynamics of popular participation in political movements, the links being forged between movements of the peasantry, the industrial labour and the freedom struggle, the youth and student movements vis a vis the political parties, the changing social hierarchy in caste terms in relation to electoral and agitational politics, the gender relationships evolving from the traditional patriarchal structure towards developments that had liberating potentials, the anti-feudal and anti-British movement in the princely states, and the interface between all these trends

³ S. Gopal, 'General Editor's Preface', in Partha Sarathi Gupta, ed., *Towards Freedom 1943–44*, Delhi, 1997, p. vii.

⁴ M.K. Gandhi, 'Congress Position', *Harijan*, 1.2.48, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 90, p. 497. Also see 'His Last will and Testament', *Harijan*, 15.2.48 where he spoke of economic, social and moral dimensions of independence, beyond the political independence which had been attained, *ibid.*, p. 526. This document was written c. 29 January 1948, shortly before Gandhi's death, and it was also referred to in the AICC papers as 'Draft Constitution of the Congress'.

in the ideational and cultural domains. The instantiation of these long-term processes through events as reflected in documents is the task at hand. The documents reflect fragments of the events which constitute links in the chain of certain historical processes of long duration.

It was decided years ago at an early stage of this project to distribute the work among editors on a purely chronological basis, that is to say each the volume in this series would relate to a particular year assigned to an editor. This opened the project to the possibility that the long term processes would be lost sight of in the depiction of the particularities of the year each editor is taking care of. I incurred unpopularity in the ICHR when I suggested many years ago that a thematic division of labour between the various editors, rather than a chronological one assigning one year to each, would have been a better organizing principle.⁵ I will not elaborate that point again. Whatever the drawbacks or merits of the chronological frame for assigning editorial responsibility might have been, it has been in operation for twenty years and hopefully it will enable us to complete the task before us. For the volume editors the limitation of chronological framework has been probably an irksome constraint. On the whole, the volume editors, each a distinguished historian, bore with fortitude the limits set on their temporal range, and they situate the particular historical conjuncture of a given year in the broader perspective of the long term processes as they see them in the Introduction to the volume. The editor's Introduction is thus a bridge between the narrative of events and the narrative of the freedom struggle as he or she sees it. The editor's introductory observations also provide a space for the presentation of his or her approach to the themes and issues the volume addresses and the explication of that approach.

As regards the sources from which the documents are collected for the volumes in this series, Professor Sarvepalli Gopal, in his General Editor's Preface, remarked in 1997: 'Although some of the volumes contain documents drawn from regional language sources, a fully comprehensive selection from these sources merit a separate project.'⁶ This was an accurate prediction of the future output, i.e. the volumes now coming out. In deciding on what non-English and regional language sources will be collected the volume editors have exercised their judgement in deploying the research assistance they were provided. Judging by volumes produced till now and the manuscripts now being received from editors and being processed in the editorial office at the ICHR, the editors possibly felt that on most of the themes addressed there exist sufficient source material in the English language and in translation. A more systematic search for and selection of non-English sources would have made this collection more complete, but it was evidently not found to be feasible. We are committed to a schedule which requires us to complete as early as possible the project undertaken in 1988–89 rather than to expand the scope of the editors' search to new sources.

One more point needs to be made about the sources. Probably, in the last decade of the Raj, specially during the World War, perspicacious observers began to sense a debilitation of the imperial powers and the impending decolonization process on a global scale, and the consequent shift in the power relationships,—this altered their perception of the politics of independence struggle radically. This was happening globally in old empires, among the people and leaders in the imperial metropolises as well as their colonial peripheries. On the latter process we do have some documentation in the present series, but not much on the shift in the imperial metropolis. This is because *ab initio* the project was meant to be mainly for the collection of sources in India. This was probably because it was clear from the beginning that we have our hands full if we look at the

⁵ S. Bhattacharya, 'The Empire on Borrowed Time: Towards Freedom 1943–44', *The Book Review*, Vol. xxii, Jan.–Feb. 1998, pp. 24–5.

⁶ S. Gopal, 'General Editor's Preface', P.S. Gupta ed., *op. cit.*, p. vii.

Indian archival sources alone. The mass and density of archival sources generated by the government in India will be evident to even a layman who glances at the following pages. Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, unlike similar enterprises in England, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to collect sources throwing light on the last days of the British Raj, this series includes a great many activities and events which are not overtly political or constitutional.

A few words on the editorial apparatus in these volumes may be in order. The chapters are thematically organized while the sequence of placement of documents in each chapter is strictly chronological. There are two guides for the reader, first the Calendar of Documents indicating the subject of each document and the source, and second, the Index at the end of the volume. An effort has been made to make the volumes as 'reader-friendly' as possible. In some collections of this nature the editorial practice has been to provide a synoptic account of the contents of each document. This has not been the pattern in this series chiefly because it would increase the size of the volumes. As it is the present volume is very bulky and the editors are to be applauded for trying to trim them down.

Before concluding I would like to put on record the annoying delays this project was subjected to on account of political interference to the detriment of academic autonomy. One result of such interference was that the ICHR authorities appointed no successor to the General Editor, Professor Sarvepalli Gopal when he passed away in April 2002; in fact all work on the project was suspended for about five years. I was asked in March 2005 to take up the task initiated by Professor Gopal, my senior colleague at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Upon accepting this position, an honorary one, my first task was to request Mushirul Hasan to complete the project he had undertaken, documentation of the freedom struggle in the year 1939. Despite his busy schedule as the Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia University, New Delhi, he responded to my request and I will like to record my thanks to him.

The disruption in the production of the volumes in the series for several years up to 2005 was tantamount to political censorship of academic work. It is interesting to note here that the British developed a system which prevented political parties' interference in such matters. The British project for the documentation of the Transfer of Power was processed through a mechanism which ensured inter-party consensus in parliament.⁷ For this purpose a standing inter-party group of Privy Counsellors was appointed and it included a minister of the ruling party and representatives of the opposition parties, the Conservative and Liberal Parties; thus, once the project was passed by that committee, the task was left to experts duly appointed and no political interference occurred. In the light of what happened in our country on account of governmental changes, one might say that there was much that was commendable in the mechanism devised in Britain.

It is hoped that the agenda outlined above makes it amply clear what have been and remain the principles of documentation in the *Towards Freedom* series. The editors of the volumes have had the freedom to exercise their choice within certain parameters and they focus upon the themes which emerge from the selected documents. An editor of a volume in this series stated what most other editors would endorse: this is not 'an attempt to provide materials for an "official" or "definitive" statement on the history of the freedom movement.'⁸ I accepted the responsibility of being the General Editor of this series since I believe that although the government of India has funded this enterprise, like many other research projects and institutions in this country, the output of the project is the work of autonomous minds of scholars guided by standards of the

⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, House of Commons, Vol. 733, col. 1706.

⁸ Basudev Chatterjee ed., *Towards Freedom 1938*, Delhi, 1999, p. lvii.

discipline of historiography. As I have said in the beginning, not only agenda statements like the one I have attempted now, but practice has defined principles as well, and that is how an academic community works.

* * *

The previously published Part I of this volume on the year 1939 focused upon four themes: (1) the performance of the provincial ministries formed in 1937 after the general election under the Government of India Act of 1935; (2) the Congress attitude to the war and the interface between nationalist leadership and an unresponsive British policy with regard to India's claim to self-determination and freedom; (3) the progress of the All India State People's Movement, and (4) the growth of the peasants' movement.

In the following pages (Part II of the volume on 1939) in Chapter 5, documentation moves from the peasants' movements to the industrial workers' trade unions and strike actions in 1939. This is followed by two chapters—one comprising documents on politics in the Congress, in particular the crisis caused by the differences between the Gandhians in the Congress and the supporters of Subhas Chandra Bose (Chapter 6) and the other on Leftist politics, the formation of the Forward Bloc, and the efforts to consolidate Left unity (Chapter 7). Finally, the last chapter addresses the theme of communal and sectarian politics of the Muslim League, the Shia and Sunni groups, and the Hindu Mahasabha (Chapter 8).

The documents in Chapter 5, Section II, indicate an intensification of conflict between the working class on the one hand and corporate business and the state on the other. The economic background to this needs to be explicated. According to the Government's *Labour Gazette*, the number of registered trade unions increased from 420 in 1937–38 to 528 in 1938–39 and 667 in 1939–40. Membership of trade unions increased in the same period from 3.9 lakhs to 5.1 lakhs. In 1939 the number of strikes and lockouts rose to 406, involving 49.9 lakhs man-days lost. A few of the typical strike actions are documented in Chapter 5. Why did working class protest movements reach such a high level in 1939? First, the latter part of the year witnessed an unprecedented spurt in inflation due to the outbreak of World War II. The real wages of factory, mine and plantation workers definitely fell, even though in some industries money wages increased marginally. This was a major cause of workers' discontentment. Secondly, even before the outbreak of the War and especially from September 1939, the increased demand for manufactures was met by suddenly augmenting production. The War period saw increasingly a new regime of labour management: suspension of existing labour laws for industries declared by Government to be war-related, increase of work shifts in factories and mines, and reckless negligence of safety measures by the management leading to accidents and injury to workers became the order of the day. In the years following 1939 the Government introduced a series of amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act and enacted the ESMA or the Essential Services Maintenance Act. Not only compulsory arbitration, but a harsher legal regime forbidding strike action was introduced. In the present volume we have a few documents on this theme.⁹ Thirdly, in 1939 the political situation precipitated industrial conflicts. The Communist leadership of the trade unions was opposed to the imperialist war and the Indian government's involvement in it. Only from June 1941, it will be recalled, the Left leadership began to be led by the slogan of 'People's War'. As regards the elected provincial ministries, initially expectations were raised in the ranks of the industrial workers that those ministries would

⁹ Problems of the Industrial Workers, Article by Dr H.P. Dastur, *Indian Social Reformer*, 18 March 1939. Workers' Right to Strike, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 3 May 1939. Chapter 5, Document Nos 10 and 18 in this volume respectively.

come to their aid.¹⁰ By 1939 a feeling of disappointment had set in.¹¹ Some of the provincial government's policies produced not only disappointment but very adverse reaction from the working classes; a case in point was the enactment of the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act 1939 which made arbitration in industrial disputes almost obligatory, precluding strike action. Apart from the Communist trade union leaders there was a strong nationalist leadership, often affiliated to the Congress, in the trade union movement; they and the socialists in the Congress, unless restrained by Congress ministries, lent support to workers' struggle against management. To sum it up, a whole range of economic and political factors made 1939 a period of turbulence and protest in labour history.

The year 1939 was crucial for the working class movement not only because of significant strike actions as in Digboi Oil fields or Bombay Cotton Mills (for which we have many documents in this volume) but also because the workers' struggle was on the crossroads in political terms. The analysis of A.K. Gopalan in this regard¹² merits attention. He pointed out that the Left in 1939, including the communists, was aiming at a unity with socialists of all hues, including the Congress Socialist Party, and thus moving the working class into the mainstream of national politics.

In order that the proletariat may play its rightful role in the national movement, what is needed is a better functioning and utilization of the existing organization and platforms – Trade unions, Congress locals, and Socialist Parties. Through this we shall be able to draw ever increasing sections of the workers into struggle, create in them trade union consciousness, develop political consciousness, train cadres, organize mass political actions and thus influence and mould the national movement.

Gopalan also condemned the tendency to 'sneer at the C.S.P' or Congress Socialist Party; what was needed was an attitude of cooperation. And above all was needed a drive to enhance the workers' political consciousness so that 'the proletariat acts politically as the vanguard of the national liberation movement.' This potent strategy met with its end after a total reversal of the Communist stance and the acceptance of the 'People's War' strategy.

The documents in Chapter 6 focus upon an exciting series of events: the alarums and excursions accompanying the clash between the so-called Left and the Right within the Congress, the maneuvers of the Subhas Bose faction and the Gandhi faction around the election of the Congress President, Bose's electoral victory and ultimately his political defeat. Bose was clearly outmaneuvered by Gandhi. On 23 January 1939 Gandhi opened the campaign with an essay on the 'internal decay' in the Congress. The election of delegates to the Tripuri Congress, he said, was flawed by 'corruption among Congressmen', impersonation, tampering with registers of voting members, bogus membership, etc. The essay casts doubts upon the election process itself and goes on to say, 'Out of the present condition of the Congress I see nothing but anarchy and red ruin in front of the country'.¹³ Incidentally Gandhi also wrote that he would be himself available to lead the Congress once again: 'Though I am not in the Congress, I have not ceased to be of it,

¹⁰ Resolutions of Textile Workers of Bombay Held under Girmi Kamgar Union, Bombay, 14 May 1939, AITUC Papers, File No. 61, Part I, 1938–39, NMML. Resolutions of the Working Committee of All India Trade Union Congress Circular No. 5, 23 July 1939, AITUC Papers, File No. 185, NMML. Chapter 5, Document Nos 23 and 45 in this volume respectively.

¹¹ See General Editor's Preface, *Towards Freedom, Documents on the Movement for Independence in India, 1939 Part I*, Mushirul Hasan (ed.), New Delhi, 2008, pp xi-xii.

¹² Textile Workers' Conference, Article by Hariharnath Shastri, *Congress Socialist*, 1 January 1939. Chapter 5, Document No.2 in this volume.

¹³ Gandhi on 'Internal Decay' in the Congress, *Harijan*, 28 January 1939, see also *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 320–21. Chapter 6, Document No. 12 in this volume.

Congressmen still expect me to give the call when in my opinion the time for action has come.... I feel I have enough strength and energy in me to lead a battle...'. Two days later Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, J.B. Kripalani, and other Working Committee members of so-called Right faction made a press statement proposing Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya as a candidate for Presidentship and requesting Subhas Bose to reconsider his candidature to 'allow Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya's election to be unanimous'.¹⁴ Bose insisted on the principle of election as a value and as the *Bombay Chronicle* put it very mildly, the election took 'a somewhat acrimonious turn'.¹⁵ The fact that Bose secured 1580 votes, against 1377 votes obtained by Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, despite the support for the latter from the senior leadership of the party, surprised most observers and the division of votes in some provinces was even more astonishing, for example, in United Provinces 185 for Dr Pattabhi and 269 for Bose.¹⁶ Mahatma Gandhi in his press statement reiterated that the election process must be made 'fool-proof for the future' by purging bogus voters. As regards Pattabhi's defeat Gandhi famously said, 'the defeat is more mine than his'.¹⁷ He also generously said: 'After all, Subhas Babu is not an enemy of his country', and the minority to which Gandhi belonged would not obstruct Bose, they would 'abstain when they cannot cooperate'.¹⁸

On the whole Bose seems to have misread the political situation because his insistence on the principle of election—as well as a fairly debatable issue he made of the 'Rightists' being supporters of the Federal scheme¹⁹—did not cut much ice in his cold relationship with the opposite faction; moreover, he appears to have failed to anticipate the political moves which eventually left him as a powerless President. Haig, a man with vast experience as an observer of Indian politics, commented to Viceroy Linlithgow that, while 'no one has ever been able to do more than conjecture what may be at any time in the mind' of Mahatma Gandhi, possibly his strategy was 'to let the Left wing have plenty of rope and if possible hang themselves'.²⁰ Gandhi's lieutenant Pyarelal in one of his reports to G.D. Birla stated that Bose's meeting with Gandhi failed to resolve the problem and the Working Committee members might send in their resignation to President Bose.²¹ The resignation duly followed and at Tripuri Congress, as the *Bombay Chronicle* rightly observed, it was 'proved beyond doubt that Mahatma Gandhi will dominate the political stage'.²² There followed many weeks of gestures towards reconciliation and Gandhi was generous after victory and also inflexible: 'the views you express', he wrote to Bose, 'seem to me to be so diametrically opposed to those of the others and my own that I do not see any possibility of bridging them'.²³ An enactment

¹⁴ Congress Presidential Election, 'Six Congress Working Committee Members' statement', *Tribune*, 25 January 1939. Chapter 6, Document No. 13 in this volume.

¹⁵ Presidential Election, Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 28 February 1939. Chapter 6, Document No. 20 in this volume.

¹⁶ See footnote on province-wise breakdown of voting figures, Gandhi's Statement to the Press, *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 359–60, 31 January 1939. Chapter 6, Document No. 22 in this volume.

¹⁷ Gandhi's Statement to the Press, *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 359–60, 31 January 1939.

Chapter 6, Document No. 22 in this volume.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ See Congress Presidential Election, 'Six Congress Working Committee Members' statement', *Tribune*, 25 January 1939. Chapter 6, Document No. 13, fn 3 in this volume.

²⁰ The UP Congress and the Presidential Election: Haig to Linlithgow, 8 February 1939. Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI. Chapter 6, Document No. 27 in this volume.

²¹ On the Gandhi–Bose Meeting: Pyarelal to G.D. Birla, 20 February 1939; and On the Gandhi–Bose Meeting: Pyarelal to G.D. Birla, 22 February 1939. Both from G.D. Birla, *Bapu, A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1977, pp. 251, 252–53. Chapter 6, Document No. 32 in this volume.

²² Gandhian Leadership Re-Established: Outcome of Tripuri Congress Session, By a Special Correspondent, *Bombay Chronicle*, 16 March 1939. Chapter 6, Document No. 57 in this volume.

²³ Gandhi–Bose Correspondence: Gandhi to Bose, 2 April 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 96–98. Chapter 6, Document No. 67 in this volume.

of the inevitable took place in the Calcutta session of the AICC on 29 April with the resignation of Bose from the President's post, giving way to Rajendra Prasad for the remaining period of presidential tenure.

After three months of intense political activity there followed a long period of mutual recrimination and criticism between factions of the Congress. We need not in this brief preface troll the predictable statements and events except to point to some unusual interventions. For instance, Sir R.P. Paranjapye, well-known as the first Indian Wrangler in Cambridge, teacher at Fergusson College, and later Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University, writes in June 1939 to protest the revision of the Congress Constitution which virtually removed the principle of proportional representation in Congress elections. Paranjapye explained as a mathematician the mechanism and principle of such representation to argue that the constitutional revision of 1939 diminished the possibility of representation of the minority point of view in the Congress. The constitutional revision, he said, was 'neither fair nor scientific but is based on greed for power'.²⁴ Another instance is Rabindranath Tagore's essay in *Modern Review* asking, among other things, 'whether the keepers of the Congress stronghold have not on occasions shown dangerous signs of the intoxication of personal power'.²⁵ Details of complaints from below arising out of a resistance to centralization of decision-making at the top, are to be seen in the documents which follow. In the meanwhile the performance of the Congress ministries in the provinces met with mounting criticism since great expectations remained unfulfilled. The Congress decision to resign in October 1939, in reaction to the unilateral decision of the British Indian government drawing India into the World War, came at an opportune time in some ways. It provided a glorious exit.

In Chapter 7 in this volume we get a picture of the wide ranging political forces broadly categorized as the Left. If one were to look for the overall trends in the mass of documents from diverse sources it would be perhaps the following. First, the idea of a broad united front including the Congress attracted many people on the Left. The illegal CPI was in any event compelled to work through the Congress Socialist Party, while socialists of various hues and M.N. Roy found it convenient to keep a working relationship with the Congress. Till the lesson of the Tripuri Congress sank in and Subhas Bose was expelled in August 1939, a broad unity seemed viable. The CPI journal *National Front* looked upon 'unity among socialists, communists and radical Congressmen' as the one thing 'essential for the success of the national movement'.²⁶ The formation of the Forward Bloc in May 1939 brought within this fold another element, volatile but for the time being a substantial aid to Left unity. The programme the communists had in mind was formulated as follows in a *National Front* editorial:

...with hundreds of trade unions and kisan sabhas under their leadership, with their vastly increased strength in the Congress itself, the socialists and the communists, if they unite with the Forward Bloc... can today give the growing urge for unity and struggle a positive form.²⁷

P.C. Joshi himself spoke of the need to avoid 'blind negative anti-Rightism' and the fact that 'in Congress alone can be the organ of people's struggle against imperialism'. He desired a Leftist bloc, in the sense that a bloc is constituted of many parties, and in this sense he welcomed the

²⁴ R.P. Paranjapye on Reforming Congress Minorities to be Represented or Excluded?, *Leader*, 25 June 1939. Chapter 6, Document No. 99 in this volume.

²⁵ The Congress: Rabindranath Tagore's Letter to Dr Amiya Chakravarti, Translated by Surendranath Tagore, *Modern Review*, Vol. LXVI, July 1939, pp. 90-94. Chapter 6, Document No. 108 in this volume.

²⁶ Unity of the Left, Editorial, *National Front*, 11 June 1939. Chapter 7, Document No. 74 in this volume.

²⁷ Ibid.

formation of the Forward Bloc.²⁸ Subhas Bose's Forward Bloc, more cautiously and less warmly, accepted idea of unity.²⁹ The Congress Socialists were, not unexpectedly, sceptical of alliance with the Forward Bloc 'in so far as it has made frontal attack on Congress leadership into one of its main objects.'³⁰ Thus an uncomfortable alliance it was, but nevertheless the slogan of 'unity and struggle' was the dominant idea in Left. The May Day manifesto issued jointly by Jai Prakash Narayan and P.C. Joshi emphasized the need for 'Socialist Unity' at a time when 'the Indian people and the Indian National Congress are preparing to assert their right to independence and self-determination'.³¹

Secondly, a general trend was that while various Left elements wanted alliance with 'radical' Congressmen, the Congress as a party was far from being hospitable to those alliance seekers. Joshi himself acknowledged that the Congress Rightist leadership were trying to 'squeeze out' the Left elements, and as regards the Forward Bloc there was an open war. But the Congress leaders had a problem on their hands—there was a widespread tendency to question that leadership within the party. For instance, an ordinary Congress member invokes in his letter to Provincial Congress President 'principles of democracy' as a basis of his right to protest, specially when 'the rights of Kisans and labourers and civil liberty are trampled down under foot by the Congress Ministries.'³² A veteran leader S. Satyamurti generalized that the Congress was 'in a crisis' because there was a section of Congressmen who believed that the leaders of the then ruling majority were unfit to lead the struggle for independence.³³ These critical views were loud enough to require J.B. Kripalani, General Secretary of AICC, to issue a statement on the Rights of Minorities in the Party. He said that 'if the Leftist group wants to exercise the privilege of minorities' they must give up Party offices and not behave as an 'irresponsible and recalcitrant minority who refuse to accept with good grace the vote and the will of the majority as conclusive'.³⁴ Nehru declared that he considered it improper to weaken a great organization like the Congress by the formation of separate groups like the Forward Bloc.³⁵ The situation became more complicated as the Congress Socialist Party began to show internal differences since leading Congressmen within that Party objected to close collaboration with the Communists. M.R. Masani, Achyut Patwardhan, R.M. Lohia and Ashok Mehta resigned from the CSP Executive Committee on that ground, provoking strong critical statements by Somnath Lahiri and Sajjad Zahir.³⁶ By the end of 1939, the Congress leadership felt the need to enforce 'discipline' and the Communist leader B.T. Ranadive was one of the

²⁸ Where Does Unity of the Left Stand? Article by P.C. Joshi, *National Front*, 18 June 1939. Chapter 7, Document No. 78 in this volume.

²⁹ Forward Bloc, *Tribune*, 25 June 1939. Chapter 7, Document No. 81 in this volume.

³⁰ Rammanohar Lohia on Forward Bloc, Article by Rammanohar Lohia, *Congress Socialist*, 25 June 1939. Chapter 7, Document No. 82 in this volume.

³¹ Days of Decision: The Re-election of Bose, *Congress Socialist*, 5 February 1939. Chapter 7, Document No. 16 in this volume.

³² Explanation Sent by Congressmen to the President, MPCC for Participating in Protest Day Meeting, MPCC Papers, Misc. files Section, File No. 22A, 1939, NMML. Chapter 6, Document No. 104 in this volume.

³³ 'Congress going through crisis', Article by S. Satyamurti, *Tribune*, 10 July 1939. Chapter 6, Document No. 105 in this volume.

³⁴ Irresponsible and Recalcitrant Minorities, Acharya Kripalani's Statement, *Tribune*, 15 July 1939. Chapter 6, Document No. 113 in this volume.

³⁵ Nehru on the Formation of the Forward Bloc, Speech at Kanpur, 21 May 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 10, p. 574. Chapter 7, Document No. 66 in this volume.

³⁶ On Socialists Unity 'Abjuring Socialism', Article by Somnath Lahiri, *National Front*, 9 July 1939. In Defence of the CSP, Article by Sajjad Zaheer, *National Front*, 16 July 1939. Chapter 7, Document Nos 96 and 97 in this volume respectively.

earliest victims of expulsion measures.³⁷ The fear of 'penetration of Congress' by the Communists did not however, lead to purge in 1939 even after the July face-off³⁸, because large numbers of Congressmen in some provinces like Kerala or Andhra were of Leftist inclination, and because the Congress had yet to recover stability from the split caused by Bose's revolt and expulsion in some other provinces.

The third trend which merits attention in Chapter 7 in this volume is Left presence in the cultural domain and growth of their influence in the students' movement. The Indian Progressive Writers' Association met in Calcutta in December 1938 and an exhaustive report appeared in January 1939 in the communist organ, *National Front*. Among those who addressed the writers were Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Sajjad Zaheer, Balraj Sahni, Ali Sardar Jafri, Samar Sen and Budhadeb Bose.³⁹ The amended manifesto of this Association stated the objectives: 'to discourage the general reactionary and revivalist tendencies on questions like family, religion, sex, war and society... to combat literary trends reflecting communalism, racial antagonism, and exploitation...to bring arts into closer touch with people', and to create new literature sensitive to 'problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness, and political subjection' as well as 'the need to develop a critical spirit which examines institutions and customs in the light of reason.'⁴⁰ Although we have only a few documents on this theme from the long-term point of view the impact of this initiative and the literary wave it created was far more important in the life of the nation than most of the political events and actions documented in this volume.

Considering the role played by the youth and students in the parties in street politics in the nineteen-forties, the evidence of increasing influence of the Left among them is significant. In January 1939 the All India Students' Conference, chaired by Professor K.M. Ashraf, met in Calcutta. The gathering of 800 student delegates representing 40,000 members of student organizations from all over India was said to be unprecedented.⁴¹ Nehru spoke at the conference to warn the students against the abuse of strike action. The Calcutta conference was followed by a series of conferences organized by Punjab Muslim Students' Federation, Abhinav Bharat Yuvak Sangha Conference in Malabar sponsored by E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Radical Youths' Association in Bombay, South Kanara Students' Conference, and several others.⁴² Apart from conferring and passing resolutions, these conferences and associations usually had a cultural agenda as well. All this had an impact in moulding the mind of the younger generation and the consequences were to be seen in the politics of the forties.

In the last, the eighth Chapter in this volume, documents on communal and sectarian politics have been put together by the editor. The basic features of these particularist discourses, running counter to the more universalist discourses of national unity and socialist revolutionary ideology

³⁷ See Chapter 6 in this volume.

³⁸ 9th July Demonstration: Is it the Parting of Ways?, Article by Somnath Lahiri, *National Front*, 30 July 1939. Chapter 7, Document No. 113 in this volume.

³⁹ India's Cultural United Front: The 2nd All-India Progressive Writers' Conference, *National Front*, 8 January 1939. Chapter 7, Document No. 3 in this volume.

⁴⁰ Amended Manifesto of Progressive Writers' Association (as adopted by its second conference at Calcutta, 24-25 December 1938), Sudhi Pradhan (ed.), *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936-47)*, Calcutta, 1979, pp. 20-22. Chapter 7, Document No. 4 in this volume.

⁴¹ All-India Students' Conference: 'Students in Session', R.K. Gupta, *National Front*, Vol. 1, No. 48, 15 January 1939. Chapter 7, Document No. 5 in this volume.

⁴² All-India Students' Conference: 'Students in Session', R.K. Gupta, *National Front*, Vol. 1, No. 48, 15 January 1939. Punjab Muslim Students' Federation: 'Let us unite not as Hindus or Muslims but as Indians first and Indians last', *Tribune*, 16 January 1939. Malabar's Unique Youth Movement, *Congress Socialist*, 19 February 1939. South Kanara Students' Conference, *Bombay Chronicle*, 25 April 1939. Chapter 7, Document Nos 5, 6, 22, and 51 in this volume respectively.

are well-known. However, the boring repetitive harangues of utterly unopen minds instantiate a trend in India politics and to that extent they claim attention. Since the communalist discourse has been commented upon in my Prefaces to other volumes there is no need to elaborate on this theme except to make some observations arising out of the present documentation.

A most remarkable feature of the communalist discourse was that two positions at extreme ends of the pole, Hindu communalist and Muslim communalist, displayed striking family resemblances. It was almost as if there was a tendency on the part of each to mimic the other. This puzzling phenomenon was not perhaps entirely fortuitous—in the political bargaining process a party has to match each move of its 'other' as a means of retaining and occupying political space. The parallelism between the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha begins with their approach to the status of their parties. Mr Jinnah was of the view that 'there would be only one party and that is the Muslim League Party so far as the Muslims are concerned'.⁴³ Dr B.S. Moonje of the Mahasabha held that in 1939 there was

...no other politics than that of the Hindu Mahasabha. If the Hindus want to survive and do not like to go under, then they must all rally round the banner of Hindu Mahasabha.⁴⁴

Both parties, needless to say, thought poorly of the Congress! In fact in 1939 the Mahasabha spokesman characterized the Congress exactly as the League had been doing for years.

The Muslims have demonstrated that they are not in unison with the Congress scheme of revolution of India as a united nation. Now, how can Congress be a national body in the sense of representing both Hindus and Muslims?⁴⁵

A little earlier Sir Mohammad Iqbal wrote to Jinnah that in his opinion Congress was a Hindu organization like the Mahasabha but it is 'the Mahasabha whom I regard as the real representative of the mass of the Hindus'.⁴⁶ Both parties habitually spoke of the Hindu and Muslim communities assuming a complete homogeneity in each. Further, they recognized their 'other'. 'The Muslims League refuses to accept that the Moslems of India are a mere community', wrote Dr Moonje. 'If such is the fact then the Hindu naturally are driven to the category of another nation....'⁴⁷ Mr Jinnah: '...the Muslims were determined to settle their main grievances with the Hindus before there could be any question of further constitutional advance'.⁴⁸ The League and the Mahasabha had absolutely analogous complaints about the elected provincial ministries' failure or deliberate negligence to protect Muslims and Hindus at the time of communal riots. If the Mahasabha complained of government inaction in riots in Sind, the League complained of the same inaction

⁴³ On the Muslim League: M.A. Jinnah to A.H. Ispahani, 20 April 1939, Z.A. Zaidi (ed.), *M.A. Jinnah-Ispahani Correspondence*, Karachi, 1976, pp. 128–29. Chapter 8, Document No. 31 in this volume.

⁴⁴ On Hindu Mahasabha: B.S. Moonje to J.P. Shrivastava, 12 January 1939, All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML. Chapter 8, Document No. 83 in this volume.

⁴⁵ B.S. Moonje on Communal Troubles: B.S. Moonje's statement on Communal Troubles and Muslim League's Proposed Federation', *Leader*, 6 April 1939. Chapter 8, Document No. 91 in this volume.

⁴⁶ Iqbal to Jinnah, 21 June 1937, Shamsul Hasan Collection, *The Paradoxes of Partition: Collection of Documents*, SAI Tirmizi (ed.), New Delhi, 1998, p. 196.

⁴⁷ Facts About Gaya Communal Riots, 6 May 1939: Bihar Government's Reply to the Muslim League's Allegations, Dr Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 1-B/39, S. No. 64, 65 & 66, NAI. Chapter 8, Document No. 92 in this volume.

⁴⁸ Note of an Interview Between the Viceroy and M.A. Jinnah at the Viceroy's House, New Delhi, on 4 November 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI. Chapter 8, Document No. 55 in this volume. Mr Jinnah said this to Viceroy Linlithgow who replied that the British were grateful that he refrained from making any 'joint demand' with the Congress and thus Mr Jinnah had rendered 'very valuable help by standing firm against the Congress claims and the government was duly grateful.'

in riots in Bihar.⁴⁹ Many of the details, real or imagined, were amazingly similar in the allegations from both sides on these occasions. If one party had in its arsenal the emotionally loaded term 'jihad', the other party could deploy the notion of 'Dharma Yuddha'.⁵⁰ Even in their choice of language one preference was finely counterpoised with another in the debate between proponents of 'Hindi based on Sanskrit written in Devangari script' and Hindustani and Urdu.⁵¹

It is unnecessary to multiply instances of tendencies in communal politics mentioned above. The great value of the present collection of documents on communal politics in 1939 is that a number of questions come to the surface. Is it possible that the nationalist mainstream leadership alienated sections of these communities by identifying all assertions of community identity, conceived in cultural terms, as communal ideology? Is it not useful to make a distinction between community consciousness and communal consciousness? There was, no doubt, a strong communal consciousness at work, each a mirror image of the other, in 1939. When, out of a multiplicity of identities cultural, linguistic, regional, caste-based, religious, and such others—a particular identity, ascribed by religious affiliation, is privileged with an exclusive status above other identities, and a principle of exclusion operates in politics, that can be described as communalism. Having recognized that such a communalism had grown in strength by the year 1939 in India, the question that needs to be addressed is whether this was a consequence of equating and condemning all forms of community identity as communalism? In retrospect this question is important to the historians of communalism and nationalism in India.

* * *

In conclusion, I would thank the Editor of this volume, Professor Mushirul Hasan, and acknowledge my indebtedness to the editorial team. In the latter half of 2005 as I was casting around for colleagues to work with me in the Towards Freedom project, I was fortunate to obtain as colleagues Professor Arjun Dev and Dr Amit K. Gupta (who has already had an important role in an earlier stage of this project); later Dr Rajesh Kumar, Mr Dusi Srinivas, and Ms V.I. Benasir joined us. Needless to say, the Editorial Committee which met from time to time since the middle of 2005 was of great help: my thanks go to my distinguished fellow-editors in charge of different volumes: Professors Bipan Chandra, Bimal Prasad, K.N. Panikkar, Sumit Sarkar, Arjun Dev, Mushirul Hasan, Basudev Chatterjee and Sucheta Mahajan. I would also like to thank Oxford University Press, New Delhi, for their cooperation.

SABYASACHI BHATTACHARYA
General Editor

⁴⁹ Facts About Gaya Communal Riots, 6 May 1939: Bihar Government's Reply to the Muslim League's Allegations, Dr Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 1-B/39, S. No. 64, 65 & 66, NAI. Chapter 8, Document No. 92 in this volume.

⁵⁰ V.D. Savarkar to Ganpat Rai, 11 July 1939, Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML. Chapter 8, Document No. 98 in this volume.

⁵¹ Bihar Hindu Conference, *Behar Herald*, 21 March 1939. Chapter 8, Document No. 86 in this volume.

Editor's Introduction

This volume is no more than a record of ideas and movements in a calendar year. It is designed to trace their evolution and introduce, for the benefit of the specialist and lay reader, the richness and variety of the various perspectives in the nationalist struggle. We bring out their strengths as well as weaknesses; we document failures as well as successes, victories as well as defeats. We record the heroic deeds of ordinary men and women, as well as people of wealth, power, and influence. We observe the anti-colonial movements spread, from the north to the south, from the east to the west, from the metropolis to the rural hinterland, from the factory to the field. Thus we have seventy-nine documents dealing with labour movements, including working class strikes in Digboi, Kanpur, Hathras, and other places. We celebrate freedom, tolerance, and religious plurality—the three essential components of Indian nationalism, and recognize the contribution of all those who helped translate such ideas and values into a reality.

Jawaharlal Nehru observed in his 'Postscript' to *Glimpses of World History*¹:

In 1935 there was the invasion of Abyssinia; in 1936 Spain was attacked; in 1937 China was invaded afresh; in 1938 Austria was invaded and removed from the map by Nazi Germany, and Czechoslovakia was broken up and reduced to vassalage. Each year has brought its full crop of disaster; what of 1939 on whose threshold we stand? What will it bring to us and to the world?

The answer is simple enough: entire generations grew up under the shadow of war. It began after Germany marched into Poland, which was defeated and partitioned. Disaster struck Europe when Germany overran Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. Only Britain was left at war with Germany, under a coalition of national forces, headed by Winston Churchill. The British declared war on 3 September 1939.

What caused the war? These volumes, covering the year 1939, provide some answers: Germany's grievances against the unjust Treaty of Versailles; Germany's strength, which destroyed the balance of power in Europe; resentment of German generals at their previous defeat; Adolf Hitler's arrogance and inordinate ambitions.

The preceding volume revealed the divisions in the Congress in its reaction to the war. M.K. Gandhi and C.R. Rajagopalachari were, for example, among those who were prepared to support the British. Rajendra Prasad, Acharya Kripalani and Shankar Rao Deo went along with him. Jawaharlal Nehru, on the other hand, insisted that the British government declare its war aims, and that only a free India would associate itself with other free nations for mutual defence against the unwanted fascist aggression. Maulana Azad, the President-elect of the Congress, agreed: 'If ...the British did not recognize Indian freedom, it was too much to expect that India should fight for the freedom of other nations while she denied her own freedom.'² Eventually, the Nehru–Azad view prevailed at the Congress Working Committee meeting held at Wardha on 8–15 September 1939.

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, London, 1939.

² A.K. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Bombay, 1959, p. 25.

Without distancing ourselves too much from the thick and thin of the war theatre, the selection of documents in this volume introduce the fiery crusade for freedom and against fascism. At the same time, they remind readers that the Indian National Congress, having formed its Ministries in seven of the eleven provinces of British India, refused to be automatically brought under the British declaration of war. The stalemate continued leading to the resignation of the Congress Ministries in September 1939. 'Time passes', Nehru wrote on 19 October 1939, 'and the world changes and the national demand of yesterday is already history. It may not be adequate enough for tomorrow.'³

The Ministries had enjoyed limited powers. Yet, they could have served the people a little better than the previous colonial administration. Leaders of the kisan and working class movements targeted the Congress ministries for not doing enough for the poor. They accused them of a 'sell out'. The UP Tenancy Bill 1939 was itself regarded as an instance of the Congress appeasement of the landowning class. Nehru conceded that the ministries 'are tending to become counter-revolutionary'. He conveyed his distress to Gandhi in April 1938: 'I feel strongly', he wrote, 'that the Congress Ministries are working inefficiently and not doing much that they could do.'⁴ He also noted the growing indiscipline in the Congress. Jayaprakash Narayan, one of the founders of the Congress Socialist Party in October 1934, made a similar remark. Others, too, noticed the gap between policy statements and practice. Phrases and slogans became dangerous companions without their being allied to clear thought and well-considered objectives and methods. But, perhaps, the ministers, mostly inexperienced in the art of governance, could have improved their performance and pursued their pet projects only if they had some more time and access to some more resources.

We can never be sure if the resignation from the commanding heights of power was an ill-advised move or based on sound considerations. What we do know is that the 'unity' in the rank of file expressed solidarity with Gandhi rather than the Congress decision to quit office. What we also know is that the ensuing differences with the government caused a virtual stalemate in the future negotiations. Consequently, the Congress reiterated its earlier decisions on 20 March 1940 and warned, much to the dismay and annoyance of the officials, that Gandhi may declare civil disobedience. It took just over two years, i.e., 26 April 1942, for the Mahatma to, ask the British to leave India. On July 1942, the Congress Working Committee, too, demanded that the British withdraw from India.

Another consequence of the resignation of the Congress ministries was the Muslim League's revival under M.A. Jinnah's leadership and the resurgence of communitarian politics. Documents may or may not reveal this clearly, but the fact is that Jinnah had a field day after the Congress exit from the ministerial arena. First, he announced 'Deliverance Day', observed on 22 December 1939. The man extolled as the 'Ambassador' of Hindu-Muslim unity should not have whipped up mass hysteria in this manner. The Congress may have been the embodiment of 'evil', but the masses were not. They had lived together separately, but now the boundaries were being drawn in such a way so that they would forget the experience of peaceful co-existence. They would forget the Sufi shrines where people of all religions would bow in an act of total submission, or the Muharram processions where Hindu and Muslim alike would raise the cry, 'Ya Husain! Ya Husain!' In other words, could Mr. Jinnah declare the shrines of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti and Nizamuddin Auliya as exclusively 'Muslim'? Were Rahim and Raskhan Muslim poets? No. Sir, they were poets who wrote in praise of Hindu gods and goddesses.

³ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 10, p. 203.

While people debated these issues in one form or the other, Jinnah opened negotiations with British officials and dictated, more or less, the terms for the eventual transfer of power. Soon enough, his plans began to yield results. The government of India was irked by the Congress attitude and beholden to the League for its support to the wartime efforts. It had no choice but to heed Jinnah's call for settling the Muslim claims. But the Muslims themselves contested these claims. Contemporary observers noted that a 'Muslim nation' did not strike a favourable chord with some groups, but it suited the British government to turn a blind eye to the activities of the Khudai Khidmatgars or the All-India Momin Conference. They also ignored the radical trends in the princely states: in Kashmir and Hyderabad, for example, Linlithgow and Wavell, a confused and largely inept General-Viceroy, reached the inescapable conclusion that the Empire's life span rested on their ability to placate Jinnah. They did so to divide, as Rudyard Kipling and the late-nineteenth century British imperialists would have desired, India into two halves.

II

There have been contested visions of nationhood from the time of the birth of the Indian National Congress in December 1885. Each group or party nurtured its vision, which had to be translated into practice in the available institutional and administrative spaces. This is how party organization and structures came into being. This is how the Congress developed its powerful networks, especially after 1919, across the country and created linkages between the national, provincial, and local committees. Building bridges across states, castes and communities, and harmonizing interests groups had always been a daunting task, but the Congress nonetheless succeeded in harnessing its resources during the countrywide agitations launched by Gandhi in 1920, 1930, and, finally, in 1942. Even after non-cooperation and civil disobedience, the Congress networks weakened but did not collapse. Part of the reason was the commanding position occupied by Gandhi: 'The Congress is of his making', Jawaharlal Nehru remarked, 'and he is essentially of it.'⁴

What is true of the Congress holds true for other parties and organizations. They were, undoubtedly, much less focused; their goals were also much less defined. Yet there is no dearth of documentation on the RSS and the Muslim League outfits, like the National Guards. The Jamiyat al-ulama and Jamaat-i Islami proceedings have seen the light of the day, but they need to be systematically studied and then analysed. Scholarship on the Ahrars, the Khaksars, the Momins, the Shia Political Conference, and the Kashmir National Conference leaves much to be desired. Likewise, liberal and radical cultural and literary trends, mostly dominated by the Muslims, escape historical scrutiny. The fact is that Muslim groups in Punjab, the United Provinces, and Bengal were comfortable with social and communist ideas, and with peasant and working class movements. Hence, the need to ensure a critical interpretation on the interplay between the forces of Islamic 'reaction' and nationalist 'radicalism.'

Here, in this volume, we have endeavoured to introduce the currents of ideas and thoughts in some of the Muslim organizations and how they clashed with one another. We record their internal dissent as well as their intra-feuds. Therefore, we document the Shia-Sunni conflict: the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* and the *Select Writings of Rajendra Prasad* can supplement them.

Talking of inter-party conflicts, we take cognizance of the Muslim League–Congress animus and their valiant but unsuccessful efforts to wrestle with the constitutional issues before and after the introduction of the Act of 1935. At the same time we have not lost sight of the agrarian and working class discontent gathering momentum throughout 1939. There is no let up of their activities,

⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India: Collected Writings 1937–1940*, London, 1948, p. 122.

and different groups and parties, both nationally and locally, focusing on the brutal exploitation of the peasants and workers. Poets and writers recorded their woes; musicians sang songs of distress and misery. They caused a stir. So did public rallies, strikes and demonstrations. In short, intelligence officers may not have known this, but the fact is that the anti-colonial sentiment reigned supreme and that the atmosphere, in towns and rural areas, was charged with hope and enthusiasm. Whenever the hopes of the people were belied for one reason or the other, their frustration expressed themselves, as in 1922 after the outbreak of violence in Chauri Chaura, violently.

My fellow-editors have charted the progress of the All India States' People Conference in the princely states. We have every reason to stay with this story and narrate its twists and turns. Indeed, there is no sign of the people's enthusiasm declining in 1939. If anything, it is on the rise. Gandhi, having revised his stand, backed the numerous movements of civil liberties and responsible government in more than twenty states, including Travancore, Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda, Mewar, Jaipur, the Kathiawar States and Orissa States. He himself undertook a fast in Rajkot. He described 'every Indian Prince [is] a Hitler in his own state.' Vallabhbhai Patel organized the satyagraha in Rajkot; Jamnalal Bajaj took charge of the campaigns in Jaipur.⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, who presided over the All India States' People's Conference in 1939, continued to write on the repression being conducted in the princely states. 'It is curious that when everyone is talking about a war for democracy and freedom and condemning Nazi aggression', he observed, 'the Indian states system should continue in all its pristine autocracy and attempts to alter and make it responsive to popular will should be suppressed.'⁶

In the country as a whole, student activism gathered momentum; literary and cultural societies gained unprecedented popularity. What is more, the communist movement began to influence national politics in a big way. Besides being imbued with a powerful anti-imperialist ideology, the movement was led by highly motivated leaders like P.C. Joshi, G. Adhikari, B.T. Ranadive, and Ajoy Ghosh. Besides the Communist Party of India (CPI), the left parties in 1939 were: Congress Socialist Party; the Forward Bloc of Subhas Chandra Bose, founded on 3 May 1939; the Revolutionary Socialist Party; and M.N. Roy's Radical Democratic Party. They were loosely linked with the All-India Trade Union Congress, the All-India Kisan Sabha, the All-India Students' Federation, a nursery of new ideas inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1936; the Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar groups of Bengal revolutionaries; and the Hindustan Republic Association. The CPI wanted these disparate forces to join hands in promoting a mass movement against British imperialism, but this not a realizable mission. Dispersed across the country and following various ideologies, some dreamt of a violent changeover, a proletarian revolution that would dismantle the oppressive capitalist order and establish socialism. Some others plotted, of course, a different trajectory from the 'revolutionary terrorist'. All in all, the left groups attracted to their ranks the finest type of crusading spirit.

1939 marks the high point of the liberation struggle. However, various fissiparous tendencies disrupted its rhythm. The Congress movement suffered a setback owing to the power struggle that led to the ouster of Subhas Chandra Bose. The Bose–Gandhi–Nehru showdown turned out to be bitter and unpleasant. When Bose announced early in 1939 that he would seek re-election, Gandhi's twelve leading supporters resigned from the Working Committee.

With the future of India at stake, the left and the right wings within the Congress differed over their respective strategies vis-à-vis a wide range of social and economic issues. 'The vital and most important problem that faces us in India', Jawaharlal Nehru had written, 'is the appalling poverty

⁵ B.R. Nanda, *In Gandhi's Footsteps: The Life and Times of Jamnalal Bajaj*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 282–300.

⁶ 17 October 1939, Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 503.

of the people. Will political independence help us to diminish this, as well as the numerous ills that flow from it.'⁷ These issues were debated across the board, with the Socialists and the Communists as well.

'Communal' or 'separatist' assertions were not new—they manifested soon after the Hindu-Muslim alliance crumbled in the aftermath of the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movements. But the post-1937 scenario was markedly different insofar as the Muslim League, the All India Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh became more and more belligerent with every passing week. Besides gaining recruits, they mounted pressure on the national parties not to yield on any point of difference. They also created a climate of mutual hostility that made the solution of the 'communal' problem all the more difficult.

On 18 October, Jawaharlal Nehru invited Jinnah for talks; they took place on 4 November. The meetings were 'agreeable' and 'friendly', but no workable consensus emerged. Instead of sorting out differences, they took to accusing each other of irresponsible conduct. 'Jinnah is completely and deliberately ranging himself on the side of reaction', Jawaharlal informed his colleague V.K. Krishna Menon.⁸ Such exchanges vividly reflect the divide among the major political actors; they give a sense, moreover, of how the common people were distracted from their day-to-day living only to find themselves in opposite camps.

In December 1929, the Congress took to independence and pledged itself to it on the banks of the Ravi. At the end of a decade the pledge stood unredeemed. 'The British Empire is doomed', and 'it is almost a thing of yesterday already', Nehru shared his enthusiasm with Azad on 16 May 1940. The fact is that independence was still a distant dream as a divided nation moved into the next decade haltingly.

MUSHIRUL HASAN

⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India*, p. 11.

⁸ 23 December 1939, Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 416.

Abbreviations

AICC	All India Congress Committee
AICSP	All India Congress Socialist Party
AIKC	All India Kisan Congress
AIKS	All India Kisan Sabha
AIRF	All India Railwaymen's Federation
AISC	All India Students' Conference
AISF	All India Students' Federation
AITUC	All India Trade Union Congress
AIWC	All India Working Committee
APCC	Assam Provincial Congress Committee
BGKU	Bombay Girni Kamgar Union
BLA	Bengal Labour Association
BLP	Bengal Labour Party
BPCC	Bihar Provincial Congress Committee
BPTUC	Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress
CP	Central Provinces
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI	Communist Party of India
CrPC	Criminal Procedure Code
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
CWC	Congress Working Committee
DCC	District Congress Committee
FB	Forward Bloc
GKU	Girni Kamgar Union
GPCC	Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee
HRA	Hindustan Republican Association
HSRA	Hindustan Socialist Republican Association
ILO	International Labour Organization
INC	Indian National Congress
INTUC	Indian National Trade Union Congress
IPC	Indian Penal Code
KPCC	Karnatak Pradesh Congress Committee
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MPCC	Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee
NAI	National Archives of India
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PCC	Provincial Congress Committee
SDPO	Sub-Divisional Police Officer

TCC	Taluk Congress Committee
TU	Trade Union
UNF	United National Front
UPPCC	Uttar Pradesh Provincial Congress Committee

Calendar of Documents

Chapter 5: Workers' Struggles

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
I. 1 January–19 July				
1.	1.1.39	Lucknow Shows New Alignment		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 981
2.	1.1.39	Textile Workers' Conference	Article by Hariharnath Shastri	<i>Congress Socialist</i> 982
3.	3.1.39	Appeal to Labourers: Resolution of the Trade Union Congress, Punjab		<i>Tribune</i> 984
4.	10.1.39	The Labour Situation in UP	Harry Haig to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2235, NAI. 985
5.	22.1.39	Report of the Non-Factory Workers' Conference	Government of Bengal, Home Political Deptt., File No. 209, 1939, NAI.	985
6.	29.1.39	All to the Rescue: Plight of 8000 Jute Workers	Sharaf Athar Ali	<i>National Front</i> 990
7.	5.2.39	Police Rule in Gokak		<i>National Front</i> 991
8.	5.2.39	The Heroic Workers of Alleppey	N.C. Shekhar	<i>National Front</i> 992
9.	26.2.39	(a) Chittivalsa Police Firing: Bureaucracy Running Amuck	K. Satyanarayana	<i>National Front</i> 994
	19.3.39	(b) Conspiracy of Death	K.L. Narasimham	<i>National Front</i> 996
10.	18.3.39	Problems of the Industrial Workers	Article by Dr H.P. Dastur	<i>Indian Social Reformer</i> 998
11.	21.3.39	Labour Movement		<i>Searchlight</i> 1002
12.	2.4.39	S.C. Bose on the Jamshedpur Workers	Statement to the Press	<i>Searchlight</i> 1003
13.	Feb. to Apr. 39	Gokak Mills Workers		AITUC Papers, File No. 61, Part I, 1938–39, NMML. 1005

S.No.	Date	Documents	Source	Pg No.	
14.	3.4.39	Report of the General Body Meeting of the Lal Bawta Press Kamgar Union, Bombay		AITUC Papers, File No. 61, Part I, 1938-39, NMML.	1007
15.	16.4.39	On the Phoenix Mills	S.A. Dange to K.M. Munshi	K.M. Munshi Papers, Roll No. 29, File No. 43, NMML.	1009
16.	28.4.39	May Day Message for India	Joint Manifesto issued for May Day by Jayaprakash Narayan and P.C. Joshi	Bombay Chronicle	1009
17.	3.5.39	Textile Strike Begins at Nagpur		Amrita Bazar Patrika	1010
18.	3.5.39	Workers' Right to Strike		Amrita Bazar Patrika	1011
19.	10.5.39	Cawnpore Mill-Strike Echo		Searchlight	1013
20.	May 39	On Trade Union Policy	Article by B.T. Ranadive	New Age, Vol. 5, No. 12	1013
21.	May 39	An All-India Worker's Party	Article by A.K. Gopalan	New Age, Vol. 5, No. 12	1018
22.	13.5.39	Hazaribagh People's Demand		Searchlight	1022
23.	14.5.39	Resolutions of Textile Workers of Bombay Held under Girni Kamgar Union, Bombay		AITUC Papers, File No. 61, Part I, 1938-39, NMML.	1022
24.	15.5.39	Labour Situation in Bombay	Roger Lumley to Linlithgow, Fortnightly Report for the First Half of May	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2194, NAI.	1024
25.	20.5.39	Congress and Businessmen	Editorial	Bombay Chronicle	1025
26.	24.5.39	The Digboi Strike	From the President, Mymensingh District Congress Committee to the Secretary, All India Congress Committee	AICC Papers, File No. G-39, 1939, NMML.	1026
27.	26.5.39	Jubbulpore Workers' Ultimatum		Amrita Bazar Patrika	1026
28.	27.5.39	Unrest in Assam Tea Gardens		Hindustan Times	1027
29.	3.6.39	Struggle of Labourers		Amrita Bazar Patrika	1028
30.	7.6.39	15,000 Labourers on Strike		Amrita Bazar Patrika	1028
31.	9.6.39	Patna Mazdoor Union Victorious		Searchlight	1029

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>		<i>Pg No.</i>
32.	15.6.39	Indian Labour in International Arena	Speech of Mr Nimbkar, Workers' Delegate from India, at the 25th Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva	AITUC Papers, File No. 212, NMML.	1030
33.	18.6.39	Phoenix Mill Struggle: Workers Answer Mill Owners' Challenge		<i>National Front</i>	1033
34.	21.6.39	On UP Government's Circular: Yusuf, President of the Mazdoor Sabha, Speaks at a Meeting		<i>Hindustan Times</i>	1036
35.	23.6.39	On Receiving a Deputation of Textile Workers	S.A. Dange to Rajendra Prasad	AICC Papers, File No. F-35/1939, NMML.	1037
36.	23.6.39	The Bombay Girni Kamgar Union	S.A. Dange to Rajendra Prasad	AICC Papers, File No. F-35/1939, NMML.	1037
37.	24.6.39	Indian Capitalists	Editorial	<i>Leader</i>	1038
38.	25.6.39	The Silk Mill Workers' Union, Bombay	G.R. Taldeokar to Rajendra Prasad	AICC Papers, File No. G-35, Part 2, 1939, NMML.	1039
39.	30.6.39	The Digboi Strike	Sudhindra Pramanik to Rajendra Prasad	AICC Papers, File No. G-34/1939, NMML.	1039
40.	3.7.39	On the Digboi Strike	Joint Secretary, Assam Oil Company Labour Union, Digboi, to Dr Rajendra Prasad	Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 1-D/1939, NAI.	1041
41.	18.7.39	Resolutions Passed by Golmuri Tinsplate Workers Union and Copper Corporation Workers Union, Bihar Provincial Trade Union Congress		AITUC Papers, File No. 54, Page Nos 375-77, NMML.	1042
42.	18.7.39	Report of the General Secretary, HEH: The NS Railway Employees' Union on the Condition of Workers at Kazipet and Dornakal		AITUC Papers, File No. 184/1939, Page Nos 7-8, NMML.	1043

II. 20 July-3 December

43.	20.7.39	Labour and Congress	Editorial	<i>Leader</i>	1045
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S.No.	Date	Documents	Source	Pg No.
44.	20.7.39	Report of the General Secretary, HEH: The NS Railway Employees' Union on the Condition of Railway Workers at Purna and Nizamabad		AITUC Papers, File No. 184/1939, Page Nos 4–6, NMML. 1046
45.	23.7.39	Resolutions of the Working Committee of All India Trade Union Congress Circular No. 5		AITUC Papers, File No. 185, NMML. 1047
46.	26.7.39	Chatkal Mazdur Union: Government of Bengal		Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Roll No. 11, West Bengal State Archives. 1050
47.	30.7.39	A Police View of Labour		National Front 1052
48.	30.7.39	Anti-Communist Circular Denounced at the Meeting of the Working Committee of the UP Provincial Trade Union Congress		National Front 1052
49.	30.7.39	First Victories: Greater Efforts		National Front 1053
50.	4.8.39	Talks with the Indian Tea Garden Association	Zetland to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI. 1054
51.	5.8.39	On the Labour Movement: S.P. Thana to Secretary, Home, Bombay Government	Report of a Meeting at Ambarnath on 5 August 1939	Home Deptt., Special Branch, File No. 927-A, Part III, Maharashtra State Archives. 1055
52.	9.8.39	Use Hand-Made Cloth Only: Resolution of Handloom Weavers of Kwagam Nadu and Srimushnam Belonging to the Senguntha Mudaliar Community		Hindu 1056
53.	10.8.39	Stiff Picketing at Victoria Mills		Hindustan Times 1057
54.	11.8.39	Mazdoor Sabha's Complaints against Employers: Secretary, Mazdoor Sabha to Secretary, Deptt. of Industries and Labour, UP		Hindustan Times 1058

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>		<i>Pg No.</i>
55.	13.8.39	A Uniform Labour Policy	Editorial	<i>National Front</i>	1059
56.	Aug. 39	Textile Crisis Before the Working Committee	Memorandum of the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union to the Congress President for being Placed Before the WC	<i>New Age</i> , Vol. 6, No. 3	1061
57.	3.9.39	Madras: Press Workers Strike	S.V. Ghatе	<i>National Front</i>	1067
58.	3.9.39	Kushtia (Bengal): Workers at Grips with the Enemy	Bhowani Sen	<i>National Front</i>	1068
59.	Sept. 39	Railway Workers' Fight—A Fight of the Entire Nation	Article by Bhowani Sen	<i>New Age</i> , Vol. 6, No. 4	1071
60.	5.9.39	On Socialist-Communist Unity	P.C. Joshi to Jayaprakash Narayan	Jayaprakash Narayan Papers, File No. 2, NMML.	1073
61.	15.9.39	Present War is Essentially of Imperialist Character: Resolution Passed by the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress		AITUC Papers, File No. 62, 1938-40, Page Nos 25-26, NMML.	1075
62.	23.9.39	A Labour Meeting at Ambernath		Home Deptt. Special Branch, File No. 927-A, Part III, Maharashtra State Archives.	1075
63.	2.10.39	Strike of Kanpur Textile Workers		<i>Hindustan Times</i>	1076
64.	3.10.39	The Kanpur Strike		<i>Hindustan Times</i>	1077
65.	4.10.39	Labour Meeting at Kanpur	Speech of Jata Shankar Shukla	Police Deptt., Box No. 80, File No. 211/1939, UP State Archives, Lucknow.	1078
66.	7.10.39	Digboi Strike		AICC Papers, File No. G-35, 1939, NMML.	1081
67.	9.10.39	UP Government and Cawnpore	Editorial	<i>Leader</i>	1082
68.	9.10.39	The Rajnandgaon Mill Mazdoor Sangh	R.S. Runiker to Rajendra Prasad	AICC Papers, File No. G-35, Part 2, 1939, NMML.	1083
69.	13.10.39	Kanpur Again	Editorial	<i>Leader</i>	1084
70.	13.10.39	The Cawnpore Affair	Editorial	<i>Leader</i>	1085

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
71.	19.10.39	Statistics of Industrial Disputes in British India, Quarter Ending the 31 March 1939		Government of India, Department of Labour, File No. 12/4/39 Poll., NAI. 1086
72.	24.10.39	Organization, Demand and Struggle of Mill Workers in the War Market, October 1939, Calcutta.	Pamphlet was published in Bengali and Hindi	Issued by Bankim Mukherjee, member of the Legislative Assembly and President of the Bengal Central Jute Worker's Union. Proscribed by the Bengal Government. 1090
73.	Nov. 39	Cawnpore Labour Situation	Article by Balkrishna Sharma, President, Kanpur City Congress Committee	AICC Papers, File No. G-35, Part 2, 1939, NMML. 1092
74.	15.11.39	Baranagore Jute Mills Closed		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1095
75.	16.11.39	Labour Movement in Kalyan	Report of meeting at Ghashtai, Taluka Kalyan	Maharashtra State Archives, Home Deptt., Special Branch, File No. 927-A, Part III. 1095
76.	22.12.39	Strike in Hathras		<i>Vartman</i> 1098
77.	23.12.39	Labour Strike at Digboi		<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1098
78.	Dec. 39	After the General Strike		<i>New Age</i> 1100
79.	Dec. 39	Weekly Reviews of Labour Situation (Countrywide), Jan.-Dec. 1939	Department of Labour, Government of India	Home Poll. Sec., File Nos 12/1/39 to 12/3/39, NAI. 1112

Chapter 6: National Politics (Nationalist)

I. January-March

1.	1.1.39	Elections to the Congress Annual Session: 'The Election'		<i>Independent India</i> 1165
2.	1.1.39	Freedom	Article by Kamaladevi	<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1168
3.	2.1.39	Bombay Provincial Congress Committee		S.K. Patil, General Secretary, File No. G-53/1939, AICC Papers, NMML. 1171
4.	6.1.39	Directives to the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee		<i>Searchlight</i> , 11 January 1939 1174

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
5.	8.1.39	On the Eve of Tripuri Congress	M.N. Roy's Statement	M.N. Roy Papers, UPCC Affairs-4, Subject File No. 7, 1938-40, NMML. Also published in <i>Independent India</i> , 22 January 1939. 1175
6.	8.1.39	The UP Political Conference		<i>Independent India</i> , Vol. 3, No. 2 1176
7.	10.1.39	Muslims and the Congress		<i>Hindu</i> 1179
8.	15.1.39	On 'Gandhism' and the Congress Programme	'Conflict of Ideas and Confusion of Ideals'	<i>Independent India</i> 1180
9.	15.1.39	Election to the Tripuri Congress	Statement of policy issued by V.B. Karnik, M.R. Shetty, Madan Shetty, Tajuddin Ajmeri and Maniben Kara, in support of their candidature as delegates to the Tripuri Congress	'Appeal to Congress Members', <i>Independent India</i> 1183
10.	15.1.39	Keeping Step With Times	Article by Kamaladevi	<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1186
11.	22.1.39	Congress Presidentship	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i> 1187
12.	23.1.39	Gandhi on 'Internal Decay' in the Congress		<i>Harijan</i> , see also CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 320-21. 1188
13.	25.1.39	Congress Presidential Election	Six Congress Working Committee Members' Statement	<i>Tribune</i> 1189
14.	25.1.39	The Congress Presidentship	Editorial	<i>Hindu</i> 1191
15.	25.1.39	Independence Day	Editorial	<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1193
16.	25.1.39	The Vidarbha Congress Committee	M.S. Aney to Patwardhan	M.S. Aney Papers, Part 2, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, NMML. 1194
17.	26.1.39	Satyamurti on Federation	Vallabhbhai Patel to Satyamurti	Satyamurti Papers, Subject File No. 18/1939, NMML. 1195
18.	27.1.39	Nation's Pledge to Independence		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1196
19.	28.1.39	'We Renew Solemn Pledge of Independence'	Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's Declaration	<i>Tribune</i> 1196

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
20.	28.2.39	Presidential Election	Editorial	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1197
21.	30.1.39	Report of the Constitution Sub-Committee of the UP Provincial Congress Committee		AICC Papers, File No. G-31, NMML. 1198
22.	31.1.39	Gandhi's Statement to the Press		<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 68, pp. 359-60 1201
23.	2.2.39	On Gandhi's Statement	Editorial	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1202
24.	5.2.39	Secretary of State's Discussion with S. Radhakrishnan	Zetland to Linlithgow	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI. 1203
25.	5.2.39	The Congress Presidential Election	Brabourne to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2181, NAI. 1204
26.	6.2.39	S.C. Bose: 'The Man of the Hour'		<i>Hitavada</i> 1205
27.	8.2.39	The UP Congress and the Presidential Election	Haig to Linlithgow	Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI. 1206
28.	9.2.39	The Presidential Election	North-West Frontier Province Governor's Report	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2210, NAI. 1208
29.	11.2.39	On Nationalist Struggle in Punjab	Mrs L.K. Rallia Ram to Jawaharlal Nehru	AICC Papers, File No. G-31, 1939, NMML. 1208
30.	11.2.39	Muslim Women's Marriage Dissolution Bill		<i>Indian Social Reformer</i> , pp. 378-79. 1209
31.	15.2.39	The Gandhi-Bose Meeting	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i> 1210
32.	20.2.39	(a) On the Gandhi- Bose Meeting	Pyarelal to G.D. Birla	G.D. Birla, <i>Bapu: A Unique Association</i> , Vol. 3, Bombay, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, 1977, p. 251. 1211
	22.2.39	(b) On the Gandhi- Bose Meeting	Pyarelal to G.D. Birla	G.D. Birla, <i>Bapu, A Unique Association</i> , Vol. 3, Bombay, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, 1977, pp. 252-53. 1212
33.	24.2.39	Punjab Congress on Working Committee Resignations		<i>Tribune</i> 1213
34.	24.2.39	The Resignations		<i>Tribune</i> 1214
35.	26.2.39	On Nehru's Statement	'Jawaharlal's Statement'	<i>Independent India</i> 1216
36.	26.2.39	On Jawaharlal Nehru's Resignation	'Jawaharlal's Action'	<i>Independent India</i> 1217

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
37.	26.2.39	On the Gandhi-Bose 'struggle'	Linlithgow to John Hubback	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2216, NAI. 1218
38.	27.2.39	Resolution Regarding Appointment of a Committee for Undertaking Legislation in Regard to Hindu Marriages		<i>Central Legislative Council Debates</i> , Vol. I, 23 January-18 April 1939, pp. 388-409. 1218
39.	28.2.39	'Incomprehensible Action of Jawaharlal'	Jayaprakash Narayan	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1227
40.	28.2.39	Rajendra Prasad on Resignation		<i>Searchlight</i> 1228
41.	29.2.39	On the Gandhi-Bose Cleavage	Linlithgow to Zetland	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI. 1230
42.	Mar. 39	On the Eve of Tripuri	Article by Iswar Dutt	<i>The Twentieth Century</i> 1231
43.	Mar. 39	The Problem Before the Congress	Article by 'An Inquirer'	<i>The Twentieth Century</i> 1233
44.	3.3.39	Jamiyat al-Ulama on Jinnah and League		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1239
45.	4.3.39	Jamiyat al-Ulama and Indian Nationalism		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1241
46.	5.3.39	Time to Resume Struggle: Meherally's Resolution for Congress		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1243
47.	8.3.39	Muslims Must Join Congress: Jamiyat al-Ulamas' Decision		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1244
48.	8.3.39	Ahrar and Ulama Conference		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1246
49.	5.3.39	Mr Bose's Statement	Article by Rajendra Prasad	<i>Tribune</i> 1247
50.	9.3.39	The Tripuri Congress	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i> 1248
51.	10.3.39	Gandhian Leadership	Editorial	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1250
52.	11.3.39	Tripuri Session	Editorial	<i>Forward</i> 1251
53.	13.3.39	Musalmans Must Fight the Battle of India's Freedom	Speeches at Lahore District Ahrar Conference	<i>Tribune</i> 1252
54.	13.3.39	Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Bill		<i>Central Legislative Council Debates</i> , Vol. I, 23 January-18 April 1939, pp. 594-613. 1254
55.	14.3.39	Women Labourers in Procession		<i>Behar Herald</i> 1257
56.	15.3.39	Tripuri and After	Editorial	<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1257
57.	16.3.39	Gandhian Leadership Re-Established: Outcome of Tripuri Congress Session	By a Special Correspondent	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1258

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>		<i>Pg No.</i>
58.	16.3.39	After Tripuri: Reactions in Bengal		Government of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Roll No. 11, 16 March 1939, West Bengal State Record Office.	1260
59.	19.3.39	The Tripuri Congress	Editorial	<i>Independent India</i>	1261
60.	19.3.39	Tripuri Congress: Presidential Address		<i>Congress Socialist</i>	1261
61.	27.3.39	Tripuri Happenings		<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i>	1264
62.	29.3.39	After Tripuri: Reactions in Bengal		Government of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Roll No. 11, 29 March 1939, West Bengal State Record Office.	1265
63.	29.3.39	Split in Provincial Congress Cabinet		<i>Behar Herald</i>	1266
64.	29.3.39	Congress Organization Broken to Pieces		<i>Behar Herald</i>	1267
65.	29.3.39	Gandhi-Bose Correspondence	Bose to Gandhi	<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 69, pp. 448-49.	1267
66.	31.3.39	Gandhi-Bose Correspondence	Bose to Gandhi	<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 69, pp. 449-54.	1269
II. April-June					
67.	2.4.39	Gandhi-Bose Correspondence	Gandhi to Bose	<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 69, pp. 96-98.	1272
68.	6.4.39	Gandhi-Bose Correspondence	Bose to Gandhi	<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 69, pp. 455-60.	1273
69.	10.4.39	Gandhi-Bose Correspondence	Gandhi to Bose	<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 69, pp. 125-27.	1277
70.	11.4.39	(a) Position of Hindu Women	Editorial	<i>Searchlight</i>	1278
	9.5.39	(b) Need of Education Among Women	Editorial	<i>Searchlight</i>	1279
71.	8.5.39	Struggle for Freedom: Women's Role		<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i>	1280
72.	21.4.39	False Cry 'Islam in Danger'	Ahrar Leader's Speech at Jullundhur	<i>Tribune</i>	1281
73.	21.4.39	Satyamurty Against 'Dual Loyalty': Plans to Ginger Up Congress for Freedom's Struggle		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	1281

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
74.	23.4.39	Congress Appeal for Enrolment		<i>Leader</i> 1283
75.	23.4.39	Before Calcutta		<i>National Front</i> 1284
76.	25.4.39	'The Blood of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs has Mingled Here': Frontier Gandhi Places Wreaths on Memorial in Kissakhani Bazar		<i>Tribune</i> 1286
77.	28.4.39	Scramble for Office		<i>Leader</i> 1286
78.	30.4.39	Act Decisively	Editorial	<i>National Front</i> 1287
79.	3.5.39	The Congress	Editorial	<i>Leader</i> 1289
80.	4.5.39	The Mahatma's Leadership	Editorial	<i>Leader</i> 1291
81.	5.5.39	The AICC Meeting	Linlithgow to Zetland	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI. 1293
82.	5.5.39	Resignation	Editorial	<i>Medina</i> , Vol. 28, No. 32. 1293
83.	6.5.39	The AICC Meeting: Bose Resigns		<i>Forward</i> 1294
84.	7.5.39	Defeat Disruption	Editorial	<i>National Front</i> 1295
85.	7.5.39	The Congress in Bengal		<i>Civil and Military Gazette</i> (Lahore), reproduced in <i>Leader</i> , 7 May 1939. 1298
86.	7.5.39	The AICC Meeting		<i>Tribune</i> (Lahore), reproduced in <i>Leader</i> , 7 May 1939. 1298
87.	9.5.39	The AICC Meeting	North West Frontier Province Governor's Report	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2210, NAI. 1299
88.	12.5.39	The AICC Meeting	Linlithgow to Zetland	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI. 1299
89.	12.5.39	Dismissed Women Workers		<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1300
90.	14.5.39	Muzaffarpore Momin Conference		<i>Searchlight</i> 1301
91.	14.5.39	The AICC Meeting: 'Writing on the Wall'		<i>Independent India</i> 1301
92.	20.5.39	Democratize Bengal Congress	Notes and Comments	<i>Forward</i> 1303
93.	21.5.39	On the League Deputation	S. Kitchlew to Rajendra Prasad	Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 3P, 1939, NAI. 1304
94.	1.6.39 and 3.6.39	UP Conference of Majlis-i-Ahrar		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1305

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
95.	4.6.39	Bengal Provincial Ulama Conference	‘Ulama Conference Scene’	<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1306
96.	9.6.39	Congress Reforms		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1307
97.	24.6.39	Congress Working Committee: Constitution Sub-Committee’s Report		<i>Leader</i> 1318
98.	25.6.39	Minorities Must Remain		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1319
99.	25.6.39	R.P. Paranjapye on Reforming Congress Minorities to be Represented or Excluded?		<i>Leader</i> 1320
100.	27.6.39	The AICC	Editorial	<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1323
III. July–September				
101.	2.7.39	Congressmen and Satyagraha		<i>Independent India</i> , Vol. 3, No. 27 1324
102.	July 39	Congress Government Stand to Protect Culture, Religion and Tradition of Aborigines		Rajendra Prasad Papers, No. F.1-M/39, NAI. 1325
103.	6.7.39	Congress President’s Declaration		<i>Indian Annual Register</i> , 1939, Vol. 2, p. 219. 1328
104.	9.7.39	Explanation Sent by Congressmen to the President, MPCC for Participating in Protest Day Meeting		MPCC Papers, Misc. Files Section, File No. 22A, 1939, NMML. 1328
105.	10.7.39	‘Congress Going Through Crisis’	Article by S. Satyamurti	<i>Tribune</i> 1330
106.	12.7.39	AICC Resolutions and After	Editorial	<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1332
107.	13.7.39	Report from H.E. Sir Maurice Hallett, KCBI, CIE, Governor of Bihar to Linlithgow	Hallett to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2187, NAI. 1333
108.	July 39	The Congress	Rabindranath Tagore’s Letter to Dr Amiya Chakravarti Translated by Surendranath Tagore	<i>Modern Review</i> , Vol. LXVI, July 1939, pp. 90–94. 1334
109.	13.7.39	Nehru on the Defiance of the AICC Resolution		<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 10, pp. 583–85. 1338
110.	13.7.39	Gandhi’s Statement to the Press		<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 69, pp. 429–41. 1339

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
111.	July 39	Copies of Resolution Passed by MPCC and Reports of Anti-Congress Meetings		MPCC Papers, 1937-39, Misc. Files Section, File No. 22A, NMML. 1341
112.	14.7.39	The AICC Resolution Protest in CP	'Protest Against AICC Resolutions'	<i>Hitavada</i> 1344
113.	15.7.39	Irresponsible and Recalcitrant Minorities	Acharya Kripalani's Statement	<i>Tribune</i> 1346
114.	21.7.39	On the Muslim League	'Night of Suspense'	<i>Medina</i> , Vol. 28, No. 52. 1348
115.	24.7.39	On Defiance of the AICC Resolution	Sardul Singh to the Members of the Congress Working Committee	File No. G-44, AICC Papers, NMML. 1349
116.	25.7.39	On Convening a Constituent Assembly	Asaf Ali to Rajendra Prasad	Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 3-D, 1939, NMML. 1350
117.	1.8.39	On Bombay PCC	K.F. Nariman to Rajendra Prasad	File No. P-7, 1939-40, AICC Papers, NMML. 1352
118.	6.8.39	Reflecting on the Future of Muslims	Zabibur Rahman to M.N. Roy, Letter to the Editor	<i>Independent India</i> , the correspondent wrote from Jehanabad in Bihar. 1357
119.	Aug. 39	'The Present Political Crisis and the Duty of Muslims'		Home (Political), File No. 37/30, 1939, NAI. 1358
120.	7.8.39	Subhas Chandra Bose to Congress President		<i>Indian Annual Register</i> , 1939, Vol. 2, pp. 219-20. 1363
121.	8.8.39	Satyagraha by Women: Serious Agrarian Trouble in Bihar		<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1364
122.	14.8.39	'Congress Fight for National Freedom'	Acharya Narendra Dev	<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1365
123.	11.8.39	Congress Working Committee Resolution		<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 70, pp. 112-14. 1367
124.	14.8.39	Enrolment of Congress Members		<i>Hindu</i> 1368
125.	15.8.39	On the Presidential Election	Nehru to Sri Prakasa	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 9, pp. 599-603. 1368
126.	19.8.39	The Disciplinary Action		<i>Forward</i> 1370
127.	20.8.39	On Action Against Bose	'On Bose's Expulsion'	<i>Hitavada</i> 1371
128.	22.8.39	Congress Workers in Conference		<i>Hindu</i> 1371

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>		<i>Pg No.</i>
129.	24.8.39	Congress 'Bull' Against Bose	Statement by M.N. Roy	<i>Leader</i>	1373
130.	23.8.39	Gandhi's Statement to the Press		<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 70, pp. 112-14.	1374
131.	23.8.39	Defiance of the AICC Resolution		AICC Papers, File No. G-44/1939, NMML.	1376
132.	28.8.39	Srinivasa Iyengar's Resignation from the Congress: Protest Against Recent Policies		<i>Hindu</i>	1376
133.	30.8.39	Electoral Duty	Editorial	<i>Hindu</i>	1377
134.	31.8.39	Bengal PCC on Bose's Expulsion	'On Bose's Expulsion'	<i>Hindustan Standard</i>	1378
135.	19.9.39	Lakshmibai Rajwade to the General Secretary, AIWC Papers, Gwalior		AIWC Papers (Microfilm), File No. 215, NMML.	1379
136.	Sept. 39	Women's Liberties and Communism	Article by Arjun Arora	<i>Kranti</i> (Hindi)	1379
IV. October-December					
137.	15.10.39	Trade Unions in India: Women Membership on Increase		<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i>	1380
138.	26.10.39	On the Congress Leadership	Gandhi to Jawaharlal Nehru	Jawaharlal Nehru (ed.), <i>A Bunch of Old Letters</i> , Asian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1958, p. 394.	1381
139.	Oct. 39	Amendment to the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1939		Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21 NMML	1381
140.	2.11.39	The Khaksar Movement	Rafi Ahmad Kidwai to Haig	Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NMML.	1383
141.	3.11.39	On the Resignation of Congress Ministries	'Islam Stands for Freedom'	<i>Hindu</i>	1384
142.	8.11.39	Muslims and the Congress	'Muslim Conference Resolutions'	<i>Tribune</i>	1385
143.	14.11.39	Congress Membership in Maharashtra		AICC Papers, File No. G-54, 1939, NMML.	1386
144.	11.11.39	The Congressman		<i>Harijan</i> , <i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 70, pp. 321-23.	1387

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
145.	18.11.39	Bengal Provincial Congress Committee: To the General Secretary, AICC		AICC Papers, File No. P-5/1939-40, NMML. 1388
146.	19.11.39	'The Only Way': Gandhi on Constituent Assembly		CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 362-65. 1391
147.	22.11.39	Working Committee Meeting		Leader 1393
148.	23.11.39	Gandhi's Discussion with UPPCC Executive Council Members		Harijan, 2 December 1939 and CWMG, Vol. 71, pp. 374-77. 1394
149.	25.11.39	Nationalist Muslim Activity	'Nationalist Muslims in India'	Hindu 1395
150.	25.11.39	Bengal Provincial Congress Committee		AICC Papers, File No. P-5, 1939-40, NMML. 1396
151.	26.11.39	Let the Congress Decide	Editorial	Independent India 1397
152.	27.11.39	All India Congress Committee		AICC Papers, File No. 05-28/P-1, 1939-40, NMML. 1401
153.	29.11.39	Gandhi-Birla Conversation	G.D. Birla to Laithwaite	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2317, NAI. 1402
154.	29.11.39	The Fighting Female		Leader 1406
155.	2.12.39	Baffling Situation		Harijan, and CWMG, Vol. 71, pp. 388-90. 1408
156.	2.12.39	Reactions to the Congress Resolution		Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of November 1939, Government of Madras, Public (General) Department. 1409
157.	3.12.39	Constituent Assembly: 'The Only Solution'		Leader 1410
158.	3.12.39	Constituent Assembly		Independent India 1410
159.	4.12.39	Two Voices	Editorial	Leader 1411
160.	5.12.39	Congress Members Enrolled in Urban and Rural Areas		AICC Papers, File No. G-54, 1939, NMML. 1412
161.	6.12.39	Nationalist Muslims' Conference	Editorial	Tribune 1412
162.	8.12.39	Momins Disclaim Muslim League		Leader 1415

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
163.	9.12.39	Constituent Assembly: Mr Asaf Ali's Observations		<i>Leader</i> 1415
164.	9.12.39	On Constituent Assembly	Viceroy to Secretary to State (Tel.)	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2161, NAI. 1416
165.	Dec. 39	The Political Awakening of Indian Women	Vijayalakshmi Pandit	<i>So I Became A Minister</i> , Kitabistan, Allahabad and London, 1939, pp. 63-78. 1417
166.	10.12.39	Women and Communal Unity	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i> 1420
167.	10.12.39	Day of Deliverance: Muslim Condemnation	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i> 1421
168.	13.12.39	On 'Day of Deliverance'	'Smirching the Fair Name of Islam', Prof. Majid on Mr Jinnah's Action	<i>Hindu</i> 1423
169.	16.12.39	Constituent Assembly		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1424
170.	18.12.39	Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee	Morarji Desai to the General Secretary, All India Congress Committee, Allahabad	AICC Papers, File No. P-24 (Part-2), Microfilm Roll No. 8634, NMML. See also enclosures: 1 and 2, Report for the Year 1939, (Part II). 1425
171.	19.12.39	On 'Day of Deliverance'		<i>Hindustan Times</i> , <i>Tribune</i> , 21 December 1939 1429
172.	21.12.39	The Constructive Programme	S.K. Patil to Secretaries Ward/District Congress Committees	AICC Papers, File No. G-53, 1939-40, NMML. 1431
173.	23.12.39	All India Congress Committee		AICC Papers, File No. P-1/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8642, NMML. 1432
174.	24-25.12.39	Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee	N.S. Hardikar to General Secretary, AICC	AICC Papers, File No. P-11, 1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8643, NMML. 1433
175.	24.12.39	Roy's Resignation from UPPCC	M.N. Roy to Nehru	<i>Independent India</i> , Vol. 3, No. 52. 1436
176.	26.12.39	Statement Showing the Number of Primary Members Enrolled by the Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee, Jabalpur		AICC Papers, File No. G-54, 1939, Microfilm Roll No. 8641, NMML. 1436

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
177.	26.12.39	On CWC Decision	Satyamurti to Gandhi	Satyamurti Papers, File No. 21/1930-42, NMML. 1437
178.	28.12.39	Independence Day	Statement by Hamid Khan	<i>Vartman</i> (Hindi daily, Kanpur) 1437
179.	19.12.39	Assam Provincial Congress Committee: Report of the General Secretary for the Year 1939		AICC Papers, File No. G-53/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8641, NMML. 1438
180.	28.12.39	On the Kerala PCC	G. Ramachandran to Rajendra Prasad	AICC Papers, File No. P-39, 1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8645, NMML. 1444
181.	29.12.39	All India Congress Committee		AICC Papers, P-1/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8642, NMML. 1447
182.	30.12.39	All India Congress Committee		AICC Papers, P-1/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8642, NMML. 1449
183.	31.12.39	(a) The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee (b) The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee	E.M.S. Namboodripad to Rajendra Prasad (On Aided School Teachers) E.M.S. Namboodripad to Rajendra Prasad (On District Board Affairs)	Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 4M/49, NAI. Also AICC Papers, File No. P-12 (Part-I), 1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8643, NMML. 1450 1451
184.		The Year's Work, 1939	Annual Report of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee	Published by the General Secretary, Andhra Pradesh Provincial Congress Committee, Masulipatnam, 1940. 1452
185.		Statement Showing the Number of Primary Congress Members Enrolled in the Districts of United Provinces During the Year 1939		AICC Papers, File No. G-53/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8641, NMML. 1467
186.	1.2.40	Bombay Provincial Congress Committee: Report for the Year 1939		AICC Papers, File No. G-53/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8641, NMML. 1468
187.	31.12.39	Shia Political Conference		<i>Tribune</i> 1471

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
Chapter 7: National Politics (Leftist)				
I. In the Wake of Tripuri Congress				
1.	1.1.39	A Communist Protest	P. Sundarayya to Jawaharlal Nehru	AICC Papers, File No. P-3, Part 2, 1938-39, NMML. 1472
2.	2.1.39	Communalism is Conspiracy to Disrupt National Movement	K.M. Ashraf	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1475
3.	8.1.39	India's Cultural United Front	The 2nd All-India Progressive Writers' Conference	<i>National Front</i> 1475
4.		Amended Manifesto of Progressive Writers' Association (as adopted by its second conference at Calcutta, 24-25 December 1938)		Sudhi Pradhan (ed.), <i>Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936-47)</i> , Calcutta, 1979, pp. 20-22. 1478
5.	15.1.39	All-India Students' Conference: 'Students in Session'	R.K. Gupta	<i>National Front</i> , Vol. 1, No. 48 1479
6.	16.1.39	Punjab Muslim Students' Federation: 'Let us unite not as Hindus or Muslims but as Indians first and Indians last'		<i>Tribune</i> 1481
7.	17.1.39	Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangam: An Appeal to Youths		<i>Hindu</i> 1482
8.	20.1.39	Independence Day Celebrations		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1483
9.	22.1.39	On the Eve of Tripuri Congress: Socialist Triumphs		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1483
10.	22.1.39	Communists and the Congress		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1484
11.	25.1.39	On the Re-election of S.C. Bose-P.C. Joshi		<i>Hitavada</i> 1487
12.	28.1.39	Re-elect Mr Subhas Bose	Maulana Madani's Appeal	<i>Tribune</i> 1488
13.	27.1.39	'Independence Day' Celebrations		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1489
14.		'Independence Day' Celebrations in Gujarat and Maharashtra		Home Department (Special), File No. 958, Part 1, 1938-40, Maharashtra State Archives. 1491

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
15.	5.2.39	Arm in Arm Not Face to Face: S.C. Bose Victorious	Editorial	<i>National Front</i> 1493
16.	5.2.39	Days of Decision: The Re-election of Bose		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1495
17.	6.2.39	M.N. Roy to R. Lothwala		M.N. Roy Papers, Microfilm (9), File No. LRC/3/7, NMML. 1497
18.	9.2.39	Tripuri Must Sound the War Drum		<i>New Age</i> , Vol. 5 1498
19.	12.2.39	Bengal Prisoners Must be Freed		<i>National Front</i> 1503
20.	12.2.39	Changing Gear	Article by Syed Mahmuduzzafar	<i>National Front</i> 1504
21.	15.2.39	A Note on Communist Activity in India		Home Department, Political, File No. 7/3/39, GOI, NAI. 1508
22.	19.2.39	Malabar's Unique Youth Movement		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1516
23.	22.2.39	Crisis Developing in Congress: Socialist Party Expresses 'Gravest Concern'		<i>Tribune</i> , 22 February 1939 and <i>Congress Socialist</i> , 26 February 1939. 1517
24.	26.2.39	Mr M.N. Roy's Appeal to Radicals		<i>Tribune</i> 1520
25.	5.3.39	CSP Must Save Congress	Editorial by M.R. Masani	<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1521
26.	8.3.39	The Task at Tripuri		<i>Independent India</i> 1523
27.	12.3.39	Lift the Ban	Article by Muzaffar Ahmad	<i>National Front</i> 1524
28.	12.3.39	National Crisis: The Way Out	Article by A.K. Ghosh	<i>National Front</i> 1526
29.	12.3.39	Nehru on the Socialists		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1529
30.	12.3.39	Organizational Crisis: Future at Stake	Article by P.C. Joshi	<i>National Front</i> 1529
31.	19.3.39	CSP's Neutrality at Tripuri		Govt of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Roll No. 11, West Bengal State Archives 1532
32.	19.3.39	On Tripuri	Article by Jayaprakash Narayan and P.C. Joshi	<i>National Front</i> , Vol. 2, No. 6 1532
33.	19.3.39	Communists at Tripuri	Article by A.K. Ghosh	<i>National Front</i> 1534

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
34.	19.3.39	Tripuri Resolutions— Our National Demand		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1537
35.	19.3.39	Tripuri—A Political Evaluation	Editorial	<i>National Front</i> 1539
36.	19.3.39	Legalize CPI		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1543
37.	21.3.39	Bihar Socialist Party and the Pant Resolution		<i>Searchlight</i> 1544
38.	23.3.39	League of Radical Congressmen	M.N. Roy's Statement	M.N. Roy Papers, Microfilm (9), File No. LRC/3/13, NMML. 1544
39.	26.3.39	Neutrality—The Best Course	Article by Jayaprakash Narayan	<i>Congress Socialist</i> , 26 March 1939, <i>Searchlight</i> , 17 March 1939, for the Full Text of Jayaprakash Narayan's Statement. 1545
40.	26.3.39	The National Demand: How to Enforce it?		<i>Independent India</i> 1548
41.	26.3.39	The Tripuri Congress: Role of the Socialists	Article Entitled 'Turning Success into Defeat' by M.R. Masani	<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1549
42.	26.3.39	The Tripuri Congress: Role of the Left	Article Entitled 'Doubts Analysed: Was it Timidity' by A.K. Ghosh	<i>National Front</i> 1552
II. Till the Formation of the Forward Bloc				
43.	2.4.39	Legalize Communist Party		<i>National Front</i> 1553
44.	Apr. 39	Tripuri—A Review		<i>New Age</i> , Vol. 5, No. 11 1558
45.	16.4.39	Fulfil the Pledge		<i>National Front</i> 1564
46.	16.4.39	Draft Manifesto of the League of Radical Congressmen: The Object and Programme of the League		<i>Independent India</i> , Vol. 3, No. 16, 16 April 1939 and <i>Tribune</i> , 17 April 1939. 1567
47.	16.4.39	The CP Socialists and Tripuri Congress	Extracts from a resolution adopted by the Executive Committee of the CP and Berar Provincial Congress Socialist Party regarding the Congress Socialist stand at Tripuri	<i>Independent India</i> 1571
48.	16.4.39	The Tripuri Congress: Role of the Communists	'Our Stand at Tripuri' by A.K. Ghosh	<i>National Front</i> 1571

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
49.	22.4.39	Radical Youths' Association	Extracts from the Bombay Province Weekly Letter No. 16	Home Department (Special), File No. 895, Part 3, 1938-40, Maharashtra State Archives. 1578
50.	23.4.39	Royism Exposed: Inverted Rightism	Article by G. Adhikari	<i>National Front</i> 1579
51.	25.4.39	South Kanara Students' Conference		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1585
52.	29.3.39	Student's Representation Against the Congress Ministry	Jayman Dave and Champaklal Bhatt to K.M. Munshi	Home Department (Special), File No. 895, Part 3, 1938-40, Maharashtra State Archives. 1587
53.	30.4.39	Tasks Before the Left-Wing: Activize the Base	Article by S.G. Sardesai	<i>National Front</i> 1588
54.	4.5.39	On Forward Bloc: Mr Bose's New Move	Editorial	<i>Hindu</i> 1590
55.	5.5.39	The Forward Bloc	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i> 1592
56.	6.5.39	Forward Bloc		Govt of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, Roll No. 12, West Bengal State Archives. 1593
57.	8.5.39	K.F. Nariman's Support to Forward Bloc		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1595
58.	8.5.39	Two-fold Task Before Forward Bloc: S.C. Bose		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1596
59.	9.5.39	Political Prisoner's Day	Press Statement	AICC Papers, File No. G-7, 1939-40, NMML. 1597
60.	May 39	National Situation and Our Tasks	Article by R.D. Bharadwaj	<i>New Age</i> , Vol. 5, No. 12 1598
61.	17.5.39	On the Forward Bloc: Subhas Chandra Bose		'Socialists and Forward Bloc', <i>Hindu</i> and <i>Bombay Chronicle</i> . 1608
62.	19.5.39	Refusal of Passport to P.C. Joshi	S.H. Zaheer to Local Governments and Administrations	Home Department, Miscellaneous Series, GO No. 3078, 3 June 1939, Tamilnad State Archives, Madras. 1610

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
63.	21.5.39	'Why CSP Does Not Join Forward Bloc': Jayaprakash Narayan		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 1610
64.	21.5.39	Gandhi versus Bose: The Fundamental Differences		<i>Independent India</i> 1611
65.	23.5.39	League of Radical Congressmen and Forward Bloc		M.N. Roy Papers, Subject File No. 3, Part 1(2), 1936-40, NMML. 1612
66.	23.5.39	Nehru on the Formation of the Forward Bloc	Speech at Kanpur	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 10, p. 574. 1614
67.	27.5.39	Release of Political Prisoners	Letter was written from the Rawalpindi Jail, Prithvi Singh to Rajendra Prasad	AICC Papers, File No. G-46, NMML. 1614
68.	29.5.39	Government Ban on the Communist Party of India		K.M. Munshi Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 29, File No. 43/2, NMML. 1615
69.	30.5.39	Release of Rani Guidallo of the Nagas	Mrs Sarala Bala Dev to the General Secretary, AICC	AICC Papers, File No. P-4/1938-39, NMML. 1617
70.	30.5.39	Satyamurti on the Forward Bloc	Article	<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1619
III. Up to 9 July Demonstration				
71.	June 39	The Crisis Deepens		<i>New Age</i> , Vol. 6, No. 1 1621
72.	9.6.39	Forward Bloc and Left Unity		<i>Searchlight</i> 1626
73.	9.6.39	On Left Unity	K.F. Nariman to Jayaprakash Narayan	K.M. Munshi Papers, Microfilm (29), File No. 43/11, NMML. 1627
74.	11.6.39	Unity of the Left	Editorial	<i>National Front</i> 1628
75.		Forward Bloc	Extracts from the Statement	Govt of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, Roll No. 12, West Bengal State Archives. 1630

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>		<i>Pg No.</i>
76.	12.6.39	On Bose–Roy Meeting	M.N. Roy to V.B. Karnik	Govt of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, Roll No. 11, West Bengal State Archives.	1631
77.	18.6.39	Communist Resolutions for AICC		<i>National Front</i>	1631
78.	18.6.39	Where Does Unity of the Left Stand?	Article by P.C. Joshi	<i>National Front</i>	1634
79.	18.6.39	Left Unity: Maharashtra Takes the Lead	Article by S.G. Sardesai	<i>National Front</i>	1637
80.	23.6.39	Bose in Peshawar	North West Frontier Province Governor's Report	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2210, NAI.	1638
81.	25.6.39	Forward Bloc		<i>Tribune</i>	1639
82.	25.6.39	Rammanohar Lohia on Forward Bloc	Article by Rammanohar Lohia	<i>Congress Socialist</i>	1639
83.	30.6.39	Conference of League of Radical Congressmen	Poona Conference Resolutions	<i>Searchlight</i>	1642
84.	2.7.39	Tripuri—A Class Approach		<i>New Age</i> , Vol. 6, No. 2	1643
85.	2.7.39	No Plan Against Imperialism: Planned Offensive Against the Left	Editorial	<i>New Age</i> , Vol. 6, No. 2	1647
86.	2.7.39	Congressmen and Satyagraha		<i>Independent India</i> , Vol. 3, No. 27	1652
87.	2.7.39	Turn the Tide	Editorial	<i>National Front</i>	1652
88.	3.7.39	Presidential Address at Delhi CSP Conference	Acharya Narendra Dev's Presidential Address	<i>Hindustan Times</i>	1654
89.	4.7.39	Grave Crisis in Congress	Subhas Bose's Appeal	<i>Tribune</i>	1656
90.	4.7.39	Delhi Socialist Conference		<i>Hindustan Times</i>	1658
91.	8.7.39	Prospects of Forward Bloc	Subhas Bose's Statement	<i>Leader</i>	1659
92.	30.7.39	Call to Action—Political Prisoners		<i>National Front</i>	1660
93.	8.7.39	The Left		<i>Forward</i>	1661
94.	9.7.39	Muslims and the Forward Bloc		<i>Medina</i> , Vol. 28, No. 49	1662

1 Calendar of Documents

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
95.	9.7.39	Mobilize Congress Masses	Editorial	<i>National Front</i> 1662
96.	9.7.39	On Socialists Unity	'Abjuring Socialism', Article by Somnath Lahiri	<i>National Front</i> 1664
97.	16.7.39	In Defence of the CSP	Article by Sajjad Zaheer	<i>National Front</i> 1667
98.	16.7.39	In Defence of Unity and Struggle: 9 July Demonstrations		<i>National Front</i> , Vol. 2, No. 22 1671
99.	17.7.39	Socialists for Composite Leadership: Z.A. Ahmed Explains		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1674
100.	19.7.39	Leftist Consolidation at Allahabad		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1674
101.	19.7.39	Give Up Hunger-Strike: Rajendra Prasad		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1675
102.	20.7.39	Release the Prisoners	Editorial	<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1676
103.	28.7.39	'Rightists Afraid of Free Verdict of Delegates?' M.N. Roy Urges Recurring Crisis		<i>Leader</i> , 28 July 1939, and <i>Tribune</i> , 27 July 1939. 1678
104.	21.7.39	For Justice's Sake		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> . See also editorial entitled 'Bengal Prisoners', 3 August 1939. 1680
105.	22.7.39	All-India Day for Release of Political: Bose		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1681
106.	25.7.39	CSP in Old Role	Editorial	<i>Behar Herald</i> 1682
107.	25.7.39	'Saving the Face': The Congress Socialists	Editorial	<i>Behar Herald</i> 1682
108.	25.7.39	M.N. Roy's Desertion	Editorial	<i>Behar Herald</i> 1683
109.	28.7.39	'Who are Opportunists?': Bose's Reply to Nehru		<i>Leader</i> 1683
110.	2.8.39	Political Prisoners Must be Released	Bengal Muslim Leaders' Statement	<i>Tribune</i> 1684
111.	30.7.39	Political Prisoners Release: National Mobilization		<i>National Front</i> , Vol. 2, No. 24 1685
112.	30.7.39	Cement Left Unity	Editorial	<i>National Front</i> 1687
113.	30.7.39	9th July Demonstration: Is it the Parting of Ways?	Article by Somnath Lahiri	<i>National Front</i> 1689
114.	30.7.39	9th July Demonstrations		<i>National Front</i> 1692

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
115.	30.7.39	Strange Leadership		<i>Independent India</i> 1693
116.	31.7.39	Left Wing in Muslim League: Hasrat Mohani's Move		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1693
117.	July 39	League of Radical Congressmen	'All India Session of the League of Radical Congressmen'	<i>Forward</i> 1694
IV. Left Consolidation				
118.	3.8.39	Through Socialist Initiative to National Unity	Editorial	<i>New Age</i> , Vol. 6, No. 3 1695
119.	Aug. 39	Socialism and Left Nationalism	Article by B.T. Ranadive	<i>New Age</i> , Vol. 6, No. 3 1700
120.	4.8.39	Good News	Editorial	<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1703
121.	5.8.39	Tamilnad Congress Socialist Party and Forward Bloc		<i>Hindu</i> 1704
122.	6.8.39	Philosophical Background of Forward Bloc	Article by Bose	<i>Tribune</i> 1705
123.	11.8.39	Preparing Country for Coming Struggle: Objective of 'Forward Bloc'	Subhas Chandra Bose's Interview on 'Forward Bloc'	<i>Tribune</i> 1706
124.	20.8.39	Communists' Call to Congressmen: Ban on Bose Must Go		<i>National Front</i> , Vol. 2, No. 22 1708
125.	17.8.39	M.N. Roy to Humayun Kabir		M.N. Roy Papers, File No. H-14, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML. 1710
126.	19.8.39	Amrendra Nath to Roy		M.N. Roy Papers, File No. C-16, NMML. 1711
127.	20.8.39	M.N. Roy on the Expulsion of Bose		<i>Independent India</i> 1713
128.	1.9.39	'Release the Political Prisoners'		AICC Papers, File No. G-46, 1939, NMML. 1714
129.	2.9.39	Socialists and the Congress	Report of a meeting held under the joint auspices of the Madras Congress Socialist Party and the Madras Electric Tramway and Madras Electric Supply Corporation Workers' Association	Public (General) Deptt, 1939, Tamilnad Archives. 1715

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
130.	9.9.39	Narmda Prasad Singh to M.N. Roy	M.N. Roy Papers, File No. S-33, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML.	1715
131.	10.9.39	‘Majaz—A Revolutionary Hindustani Poet’ by Sajjad Zaheer	<i>National Front</i>	1716
132.	16.9.39	M.N. Roy to Narmda Prasad	M.N. Roy Papers, File No. S-33, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML.	1718
133.	26.9.39	Maginots and Siegfrieds in Congress	Article by Rammanohar Lohia	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 1719
134.	18.11.39	The Communist Party of India	Circular Memorandum of Intelligence Bureau	Home (Political), File No. 7-7/1939, NAI. 1721
135.	26.11.39	Bose’s Pleading for Mass Struggle		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1730
136.	3.12.39	Morality of Political Bankruptcy	Editorial	<i>Independent India</i> 1732
137.	7.12.39	‘We are under cross-fire’	Subhas Chandra Bose on Forward Bloc Resolution	<i>Tribune</i> 1734
138.	29.12.39	‘New Independence Pledge will Result in Political Suicide of Congress’: Mr M.N. Roy Exhorts Leftists to Oppose it		<i>Leader</i> 1736
139.	28.12.39	On Independence Day Pledge	V.B. Karnik to M.N. Roy	M.N. Roy Papers, Subject File No. 3, Part 1, NMML. 1737
140.	31.12.39	A Manifesto: To the Members of the Indian National Congress		<i>Independent India</i> 1738

Chapter 8: Communal (and Sectarian) Politics

I. Muslims

1.	3.1.39	On Minority Grievances	Editorial	<i>Behar Herald</i>	1741
2.	6.1.39	On the Muslim League Session		<i>Hindustan Times</i>	1742
3.	10.1.39	The Muslim League Session at Patna	Harry Haig to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.	1743
4.	12.1.39	Sir Mohd. Yakub on Congress: Draft Resolution		<i>Tribune</i>	1743

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
5.	15.1.39	On the Muslim League Meeting	Linlithgow to Hallett	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2187, NAI. 1744
6.	15.1.39	CP Muslim League and Vidya Mandir Scheme	Editorial	<i>Hitavada</i> 1745
7.	22.1.39	Punjab Premier and Congress	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i> 1746
8.	23.1.39	Hindu-Muslim Compromise	Viceroy to Secretary of State	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI. 1748
9.	24.1.39	On the Muslim League Conference at Patna	Harry Haig to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI. 1750
10.	27.1.39	Nagpur Muslim and the Vidya Mandir Scheme: Muslims Launch Satyagraha		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1750
11.	2.2.39	The Future of Muslims	Firoz Khan Noon to Aga Khan	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI. 1752
12.	4.2.39	Note on Muslim Satyagraha Against Vidya Mandir Scheme at Nagpur		AICC Papers, File No. G-26, 1938-39, NMML. 1753
13.	6.2.39	On Muslim League Complaints Against Bihar Ministry	Hallet to Shri Krishna Sinha	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI. 1754
14.	7.2.39	Aga Khan on Prospects of Congress-League Entente	Aga Khan to Firoz Khan Noon	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI. 1755
15.	13.2.39	Cawnpore Riots, Heavy Toll, Sixty Killed on Sunday: Police Open Fire Seven Times		<i>National Herald</i> 1756
16.	18.2.39	On Reorganization of the Muslim League	M.A.H. Ispahani to M.A. Jinnah	Z.H. Zaidi (ed.), <i>M.A. Jinnah-Ispahani Correspondence 1936-1948</i> Karachi, 1976, pp. 124-27. 1757
17.	25.2.39	The Communal Situation in UP	Harry Haig to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI. 1759
18.	28.2.39	Jinnah on Federation	Linlithgow to Zetland	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI. 1760
19.	12.3.39	The Communal Problem	Article by B.T. Ranadive	<i>National Front</i> 1760
20.	28.3.39	On Jinnah's Politics	Linlithgow to Zetland	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI. 1764
21.	28.3.39	On Jinnah's Politics	Linlithgow to Zetland	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI. 1765

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
22.	28.3.39	Muslims on Federation	Zetland to Linlithgow	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI. 1766
23.	1.4.39	Partition of India	Editorial	<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1768
24.	8.4.39	Education of Muslims, The Pirpur Committee's Report		<i>Indian Annual Register</i> , Vol. 1, 1939, pp. 475–76. 1769
25.	9.4.39	Suggestions on Promotion of Communal Unity		<i>Leader</i> 1770
26.	10.4.39	The Communal Situation in UP	Harry Haig to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI. 1771
27.	12.4.39	On 'Partition Scheme'	Linlithgow to Zetland	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI. 1773
28.	14.4.39	On 'Muslim Politics'	Linlithgow to Hallett	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2187, NAI. 1773
29.	17.4.39	On 'Muslim Attitude'	Linlithgow to Zetland	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI. 1774
30.	19.4.39	'Why I resigned'	Sir A. Ghuznavi's Statement	<i>Tribune</i> 1775
31.	20.4.39	On the Muslim League	M.A. Jinnah to A.H. Ispahani	Z.A. Zaidi (ed.), <i>M.A. Jinnah—Ispahani Correspondence</i> , Karachi, 1976, pp. 128–29. 1777
32.	8.5.39	On the Bombay Provincial Muslim League Conference		<i>Hindu</i> 1778
33.	8.5.39	Hallett to Linlithgow		Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2187, NAI. 1779
34.	8.5.39	Federation, Muslim League and Congress: Jinnah's Apprehensions		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1785
35.	12.5.39	The Muslim League Deputation	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i> ; see also Saifuddin Kitchlew to Rajendra Prasad, 21 May 1939, Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), <i>Dr. Rajendra Prasad Correspondence and Select Documents</i> , Vol. 3, New Delhi, 1984, p. 85. 1785
36.	17.5.39	Congress Muslims' Decision		<i>Searchlight</i> 1786
37.	21.5.39	Communal Politics		Rajendra Prasad Papers, 1939, File No. 3-P/39, NAI. 1787

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>		<i>Pg No.</i>
38.	10.6.39	The Communal Question: The Viceroy's Reflections	Linlithgow to Hallett	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2187, NAI.	1787
39.	13.6.39	Muslim League Meeting at Jharia		<i>Searchlight</i>	1788
40.	13.6.39	'Congress-League Entente'	Editorial	<i>Behar Herald</i>	1789
41.	6.6.39	On Communal Controversies	Zetland to Linlithgow	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI. See also, Zetland to Linlithgow, 27 June 1939	1789
42.	15.6.39	Hallett to Linlithgow		Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2187, NAI.	1790
43.	1.7.39	Muslims and Federation	Haig to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.	1792
44.	7.7.39	Muslims and Federation	Linlithgow to Zetland	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.	1794
45.	17.7.39	Gandhi on Sikander Hyat Khan's 'Scheme'	Gandhi to Sikander Hyat Khan	<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 70, pp. 4-5.	1794
46.	21.7.39	On Sikander Hyat's Scheme of Federation	Linlithgow to Zetland	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.	1797
47.	25.7.39	Muslim League Propaganda: Demonstration at Allahabad		<i>Leader</i>	1797
48.	8.8.39	Mr Jinnah's Discovery	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i>	1799
49.	28.8.39	The Muslim League Council Meeting		<i>Hindustan Times</i>	1801
50.	31.8.39	On 'Communal Problem'	Linlithgow to Zetland	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.	1802
51.	19.9.39 to 20.9.39	On the Muslim League	Zetland to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.	1803
52.	7.10.39	Viceroy's Interviews with Ismail Khan, Savarkar and Ambedkar	Linlithgow to Zetland	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.	1804
53.	13.10.39	Fazlul Haq on Congress Ministry	A.K. Fazlul Haq to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI.	1806
54.	30.10.39	Congress-League Question	Jinnah's Reply to the Mahatma	<i>Leader</i>	1808
55.	4.11.39	Note of an Interview Between the Viceroy and M.A. Jinnah at the Viceroy's House, New Delhi		Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI.	1808
56.	6.11.39	Viceroy-Jinnah Meeting	Linlithgow to Zetland	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI.	1811

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>		<i>Pg No.</i>
57.	13.11.39	On Communal Demands	Linlithgow to Hubback	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2216, NAI.	1813
58.	16.11.39	Significance of 'Id' Prayer: Mr Jinnah's Broadcast		<i>Leader</i>	1813
59.	16.11.39	Congress Ministries and the Muslims	Fazlul Huq to Jawaharlal Nehru	Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, Vol. 20, 1939, NMML.	1814
60.	16.11.39	Congress-League Talks	Article by the Nawab of Chhatari	<i>Leader</i>	1815
61.	25.11.39	Interview with Jinnah	Roger Lumley to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2194, NAI.	1815
62.	27.11.39	The Muslim Problem in India	Syed Abdul Latif to Rajendra Prasad	<i>The Pakistan Issue</i> , Lahore, 1943.	1816
63.	28.11.39	Liaquat Ali Khan's Presidential Address at the Darbhanga Muslim League Conference		<i>Searchlight</i>	1824
64.	9.12.39	Resignation of Congress Governments: Muslims Asked to Celebrate Event, Day of Thanksgiving on 22 December		<i>Leader</i>	1826
65.	9.12.39	Constituent Assembly: Mr Jinnah's Statement		<i>Leader</i> , and <i>Hindustan Times</i>	1827
66.	13.12.39	The Communal Issue	Jinnah to Jawaharlal Nehru	Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, File No. W1-39, Part 1, NMML.	1829
67.	15.12.39	The Hindu-Muslim Tangle	Jinnah to Jawaharlal Nehru	Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, File No. W1-39, Part 1, NMML.	1830
68.	16.12.39	'Deliverance Day'—A Vital Occasion for Recording Muslim Solidarity Against Congress Conspiracy		<i>Star of India</i>	1830
69.	17.12.39	How to Settle India's Communal and Political Problems: Sikander Hyat Khan	Interview with the Lahore journalists	<i>Tribune</i>	1831
70.	18.12.39	Communal Zone—The Only Solution of Communal Problem	Muslim Educationists' Reply to Mr Gandhi's Argument	<i>Star of India</i>	1832

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
71.	20.12.39	Mr Jinnah's Statement: Functions on December 22, Pure Condemnation of Congress Regime		<i>Leader</i> 1833
72.	23.12.39	North-West Frontier Province Governor's Report		Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2210, NAI. 1835
73.	26.12.39	Muslims—A Separate Nation: Religion and God Above Country	Chaudhury Khaliquzzaman's Speech	<i>Searchlight</i> 1835
74.	27.12.39	'Muslim Allegation: A Pure Myth', Rafi Ahmad Kidwai		<i>Hindu</i> 1836
75.	27.12.39	The Communal Problem in India	Syed Abdul Latif	<i>The Pakistan Issue</i> , Lahore, 1943. 1837
76.	31.12.39	Nehru on Sikander Hyat Khan's Proposal	Interview to the Press, Lahore	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 10, pp. 422–23. 1839
77.		'The Muslim Attitude in India'		E.J. Benthall Papers, Box No. 10, Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge. 1840
78.		Sayyed Ali Muhummed H. Rashdi, Secretary, Sind Provincial Moslem League, on Sind Ministry and Congress.		Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), <i>Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents</i> , Vol. 4, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 223–24. 1843
79.		Copy of a Letter Alleging Discrimination Against Muslim Press in Congress-ruled Provinces		Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), <i>Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents</i> , Vol. 4, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 225–27. 1845
80.	29.12.39 to 31.12.39	All India Muslim Educational Conference: Fifty-second Session, Calcutta		<i>Indian Annual Register</i> , Vol. II, 1939, pp. 425–28. 1848
II. Hindus				
81.	4.1.39	On the Hindu Mahasabha Session	Moonje to Jayakar	M.R. Jayakar Papers, File No. 6, Part 1, NAI. 1853
82.	11.1.39	The Hindu Mahasabha Agitation and Hyderabad	Francis Wylie to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2196, NAI. 1854

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
83.	12.1.39	On Hindu Mahasabha	B.S. Moonje to J.P. Shrivastava	All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML. 1855
84.	24.1.39	Hindu-Muslim Problem in Bengal: A Hindu Mahasabhite View	Ashutosh Lahiry to Savarkar	Savarkar Papers, D.2.2 Microfilm Roll No. 34, NMML. 1855
85.	20.2.39	Cawnpore Riots	Press Statement for Publication	Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, pp. 253-57, NMML. 1856
86.	21.3.39	Bihar Hindu Conference		<i>Behar Herald</i> 1858
87.	28.3.39	The Bihar Hindu Sabha	Proceedings of the Bihar Provincial Hindu Conference Held at Monghyr	<i>Searchlight</i> 1858
88.	28.3.39	Hindu Sabha Pretensions	Editorial	<i>Searchlight</i> 1860
89.	3.4.39	Dividing India into Communal Zones: Moonje's Opposition to Scheme		<i>Leader</i> 1861
90.	5.4.39	'Pro-Muslim Policy of Congress Government': Hindus' Meeting at Lucknow		<i>Leader</i> 1861
91.	6.4.39	B.S. Moonje on Communal Troubles	B.S. Moonje's Statement on Communal Troubles and Muslim League's Proposed Federation	<i>Leader</i> 1862
92.	6.5.39	Facts About Gaya Communal Riots	Bihar Government's Reply to the Muslim League's Allegations	Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 1-B/39, S. No. 64, 65 & 66, NAI. 1864
93.	19.5.39	Bengal Hindu Sabha		<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 1876
94.	7.6.39	'Medieval Mentality': On the Views of V.D. Savarkar	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i> 1877
95.	26.6.39	On Federation	Editorial	<i>Leader</i> 1878
96.	1.7.39	A 'Hindu' Meet		<i>Tribune</i> 1879
97.	9.7.39	UP Premier's Failure to Protect Hindus: Mahasabha's Protest		<i>Leader</i> 1880
98.	11.7.39	V.D. Savarkar to Ganpat Rai		Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML. 1880

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>		<i>Pg No.</i>
99.	4.8.39	The Problem of Communal Unity: Raja Narendra Nath		<i>Tribune</i>	1882
100.	11.8.39	Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha	Sarat Chandra Bose to Narendra Nath Das	AICC Papers, File No. PL-90/1939, NMML.	1884
101.	29.8.39	The Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha	Editorial	<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i>	1887
102.	6.9.39	On Hindu Mahasabha Strategy	V.D. Savarkar to Tatyarao	Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML.	1889
103.	7.9.39	The Hindu Mahasabha and War	Ganpat Rai to M.R. Jayakar	M.R. Jayakar Papers, File. No. 709, 1939, NAI.	1889
104.	12.9.39	Hindu Mahasabha and War	M.R. Jayakar to Ganpat Rai	Ganpat Rai Papers, File No. J-4, NMML.	1890
105.	21.9.39	On Communal Award and 'National Demand'	M.S. Aney to Indra Narayan Sengupta	M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, Part 2, NMML.	1891
106.	23.9.39	The Hindus and Congress	Editorial	<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i>	1891
107.	7.10.39	On the Muslim Movement	Gokul Chand Narang to a Minister in UP	B.G. Kher Papers, File No. 15, NMML.	1893
108.	11.10.39	Consolidating the Hindus: Dr S.P. Mookherjee's Tour		<i>Leader</i>	1898
109.		Hindu Mahasabha and War		M.R. Jayakar Papers, File No. 709, 1939, NAI.	1900
110.	28.10.39	Mahasabha's Duty: Dr Moonje's Statement		<i>Leader</i>	1902
111.	29.10.39	Bengal Hindu Mahasabha's Statement		<i>Tribune</i>	1903
112.		Report on Sukkur Riots		All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-24, NMML.	1904
113.	23.11.39	Congress Ministries Accused of Injuring Hindu Interests: Communal Unity Not Necessary for Achieving Independence	Dr Moonje in Patna	<i>Searchlight</i>	1908

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
114.	28.11.39	Bengal Hindus: Representation to Congress Working Committee		1910
115.	28.12.39	The Hindu Mahasabha	Editorial	1912
116.	31.12.39	Hindu Mahasabha Resolutions: 21st Session at Calcutta, December 1939 or 'Demand for Dominion Status, Consolidation of Hindus and the Formation of National Militia'		1913
117.	30.12.39	Mr Savarkar's Address	Editorial	1921
118.		A Poem on Arya Unity and 'The Divine Law'		1923
119.		The Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Yuvak Sabha: Constitution, Objects and Rules		1926
III. Shias and Sunnis				
120.		The All India Shia Political Conference		1928
121.	10.2.39	The Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy	Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper	1929
122.	13.3.39	Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper, D.O. 141-C.R.		1930
123.	18.3.39	Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper, D.O. 155-C.R.		1931

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
124.	24.3.39	Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper, D.O. 168-C.R.	General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 65, Box 607, Uttar Pradesh State Archives.	1932
125.	4.4.39	Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper, D.O. 190-C.R.	General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 65, Box 607, Uttar Pradesh State Archives.	1932
126.	8.4.39	'Tabarra is Not Abused': 93 Shias Court Arrest on Thursday	<i>National Herald</i>	1933
127.	9.4.39	Hundred Arrests in City: Eighth Day of Tabarra Agitation	<i>National Herald</i>	1933
128.	11.4.39	Stray Assaults in Lucknow: Dispute over Madh-e-Sahaba	<i>National Herald</i>	1934
129.	17.4.39	On Shia-Sunni Controversy	Nehru to Abul Kalam Azad	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 10, pp. 334-35. 1935
130.	18.4.39	The Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy	Harry Haig to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI. 1936
131.	26.4.39	The Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy	Haig to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI. 1941
132.	9.5.39	On Madh-e-Sahaba and Tabarra Agitation in UP	Rajendra Prasad to Govind Ballabh Pant	Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), <i>Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents</i> , Vol. 3, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 62-63. 1943
133.	9.5.39	The Sectarian Impasse	Haig to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI. 1943
134.	11.5.39	Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper	D.O. 296-C.R., General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 65, Box 607, Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow.	1945
135.	12.5.39	Nehru to Indira Nehru	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 10, pp. 624-25.	1945
136.	16.6.39	Nehru to G.B. Pant	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 10, pp. 383-84.	1946

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
137.	12.5.39	On Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy	Nehru to Rajendra Prasad	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 10, pp. 336–37. See also Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 17 and 27 May and to Vallabhai Patel, 17 May 1939 in <i>ibid.</i> , pp. 339–40, 342–43. 1946
138.	14.5.39	On the Shia–Sunni Dialogue	Jawaharlal Nehru to Rajendra Prasad	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 10, pp. 338–39. 1947
139.	16.5.39	Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper		General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 65, Box 607, Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow. 1947
140.	16.5.39	The Shia–Sunni Impasse	Rajendra Prasad to Jawaharlal Nehru	Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), <i>Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents</i> , Vol. 3, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 77–78. 1948
141.	17.5.39	The Shia–Sunni Impasse	Jawaharlal Nehru to Rajendra Prasad	Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), <i>Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents</i> , Vol. 3, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 78–79. 1949
142.	18.5.39	The Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy	Harry Haig to Linlithgow	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI. 1949
143.	18.6.39	Azad Suggests Round Table Conference: Shia–Sunni Settlement Chances Brighten		<i>National Herald</i> 1954
144.	19.6.39	Shia Agitation to Continue: Maulana Azad’s Promise to Deputation		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1954
145.	20.6.39	Suspension of Civil Disobedience: Maulana Azad’s Appeal to Shia Leaders		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 1955
146.	22.6.39	Not Much Difference Between Views, Reply to Maulana Azad	Shia Deputation Leader’s Statement	<i>National Herald</i> 1957

Chapter 5. Workers' Struggles

I 1 JANUARY–19 JULY

1. Lucknow Shows New Alignment

Congress Socialist, 1 January 1939.

1 January 1939

The General Council of the AITUC met at Lucknow on 22 and 23 December and dispersed without providing the Trade Union movement with anything substantial which would carry it a step forward. The attendance was very thin and both mornings members had to wait a while before a quorum was available to enable business to proceed.

The most interesting feature of the meeting is the light it has thrown on the alignment of political groupings inside the TUC as the result of the affiliation of the NTUF. The net result of the unification, so far as political colour is concerned, appears to be that the balance of forces has shifted from pro-Congress to anti-Congress elements.

In the old TUC the Congress Socialists were the biggest single group and were able to foster a pro-Congress orientation in the policy of the TUC. Now that is all a thing of the past. The Lucknow meeting has shown a Liberal Communist majority firmly in the saddle which is quite unconcerned by the dangers of widening the gulf between the TUC and the Congress. Every controversial issue, it seems, found the Liberals, Communists and Royists in one camp and the Congress Socialists in the other.

Another feature was the emergence of N.M. Joshi¹ as the virtual dictator and those present were struck by the way in which the Communists are out of his hand. In the election, with the support of the NTUF. votes of R.S. Nimbkar as delegate to the ILO at Geneva as against Hariharnath Shastri,² they got the reward for their docility. Only in one respect were both they and Roy more militant than Mr Joshi and that was in their denunciation of all things emanating from the Congress and from Congress Ministries! On this, as on other points, credit must be given to Mr N.M. Joshi for exercising generally a serene and restraining influence.

The proceedings appear to have started with a break over a certain portion of the opening remarks of Mr Suresh Chandra Banerjee,³ the President. In reviewing the events of the past few months, it is understood that he deplored on the one hand the violence on the part of strikers in Bombay on November 7, the attempts to remove Gandhi caps and National Flags and the shouting of anti-Congress slogans and on the other the firing by the police.

This, it transpires, roused the ire of the Bombay Communists, who made wild and unseemly attacks on the President and challenged the truth of his remarks. Out of deference to their feelings and objections, it seems, Dr Banerjee agreed to withdraw that paragraph of his speech and it was deleted from the version sent to the press.

Next morning's *National Herald* contained, however, a reference to this incident and so there was another tempest in the tea pot and it was decided to issue a correction of what was described as a 'false and tendentious' report which, though undoubtedly inaccurate in some particulars, contained a kernel of truth. It seems a pity the proceedings of the General Council were held in camera and were not allowed to see the light of day:

It must be conceded, however, that the resolution adopted on the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act is, though it shows the same anti-Congress bias, an improvement on the resolution passed by the AITUC. Working Committee at Nagpur in September. The wild language of the earlier resolution and of Bombay Provincial TUC pronouncements is happily missing. On the other hand it does seem to be a pity that the resolution ends with a threat to the Congress and that an 'All-India Day' has been fixed for demonstrating against the Act while the TUC. President is still carrying on parleys with the Congress leadership for modification of the measure through consultation between the National Congress and the AITUC.

The Council in this and other respects appears to have shown a lack of consideration for the President who has been working so hard, and against heavy odds to secure an agreed solution of this problem and to undo the mischief that has resulted through the intransigence of both the Congress Government and the Provincial TUC in Bombay.

¹ N.M. Joshi (1879–1955); born at Goregaon, Kolaba district, Bombay; educated at Goregaon, Poona, Bombay and Ratnagiri; joined Servants of India Society, 1909; started Bombay Social Service League, 1911; and its General Secretary till 1953; later its Vice-President and President, 1953–55; member, Bombay Municipal Corporation, 1919–23; member, Indian Legislative Assembly, 1921–47; started the All India Trade Union Congress, 1921; its General Secretary, 1925–29, 1940–48; President, Railwaymen's Federation, 1929; member, Royal Commission on Indian Labour, 1929–30; delegate to the Indian Round Table Conference, 1930–32; President, Bombay Civil Liberties Union, 1937–38; represented the Indian Labour at International Labour Organization Conference many times.

² Hariharnath Shastri (1904–53); born in Wazipur village, Ballia, UP and was educated at Saran and Banaras; participated in the Non-cooperation movement, 1921, and was jailed for one year; Secretary to Lala Lajpat Rai, 1923–25; organized Trade Unions in the sugar industry and the railways in North India; one of the founder-members of the Congress Socialist Party, 1934; nominated to the UP Legislative Council, 1937, member, Constituent Assembly, 1946; also one of the founder-members of INTUC, 1946.

³ Dr Suresh Chandra Banerjee (1887–1961); born in Chandpur, East Bengal, he studied in Calcutta Medical College to become a doctor in the army. Resigned from his Commission in 1920 he joined the Non-Cooperation movement. During Salt Satyagraha in 1930, he violated Salt Law in (Midnapore) and was imprisoned for two and a half years. On release he devoted himself to organizing the Labour, and founded the Bengal Labour Association in 1933 on Gandhian model. In 1935 his organization merged with Bengal Provincial Trade Union Congress, and Banerjee was elected President of the AITUC in Nagpur in 1938. His gradual radicalization took a conservative turn when he became the first President of Indian National Trade Union Congress in 1947, following three years imprisonment without trial for participating in the Quit India movement. He served as Labour minister in Dr P.C. Ghosh government of West Bengal, left Congress to join Krishak Praja Mazdoor Party, and represented Labour constituency in the Bengal Legislative Assembly.

2. Textile Workers' Conference

Article by Hariharnath Shastri, *Congress Socialist*, 1 January 1939.

1 January 1939

The second session of the All India Textile Workers' Conference was held at Cawnpore on 24 and 25 December 1938, under the presidentship of Mr N.M. Joshi. A bold lead was given to the

Conference by Chairman of the Reception Committee—Pandit Balkrishna Sharma—who sounded a timely note of warning to labour leaders in the country, against any tendency to create a rift between the trade union movement and the national movement for freedom, fought under the banner of the Congress. In this connection, he cited the instance of the Chinese Communist Party, which had given up its past sectarian policy, abolished the Soviet government and made common cause with Chiang-Kai-Shek.

The presidential address of Mr N.M. Joshi was unique from another point of view. It scrupulously avoided flying in the air and dwelt in a clear cut and scientific manner on the problems of textiles workers. Mr Joshi made out a case not only for restoration of wage cuts but also for substantial wage increase with remarkable clarity and forcefulness. Besides, he put some very useful and constructive suggestions regarding social legislation for Indian workers which deserve serious and careful consideration by provincial and central governments.

The Bombay Trade Disputes' Act was one of the main subjects discussed at the Conference. It was unanimously felt at the Conference that the Bombay Government should not have rushed through the bill and thus precipitated a crisis that could have been avoided, had the labour opinion been taken into confidence and had ample opportunity been given to them to offer their suggestions so as to make the same acceptable to the working-class. The undue haste with which the Bombay Government tried to secure passage of the Bill made the working class suspicious of the intentions of the Government and gave rise to unnecessary bitterness and antagonism between the working-class and the Congress. The All India Textile Workers' Conference, while regretting the attitude of the Bombay Government, urged on them not to bring the measure into operation in its present form, unless the same was materially changed so as to meet the wishes of workers. The Conference also condemned the Bombay firing on unarmed workers and protested against restricted terms of reference of the Inquiry Committee appointed by the Government.

By another resolution, the Conference defined the basic rights of the Indian Textile Workers as eight hours' day and seven hours' night with extra allowance, minimum living wage, standardization of wage rates in the industry, security of service, health and sickness and unemployment schemes and provision of old age pensions under public control, right to form unions and right to recognition by employers, establishment of labour exchange and provision of holidays with full pay.

The Conference decided to set up an All India Organization of Textile Workers, so that greater coordination on an All India scale may be possible and standardization of wages and standard service rules for the industry as a whole may be demanded effectively. A sub-Committee has been formed to frame rules for the proposed organization and the same would be discussed at the next Conference.

The Conference also protested against the proposed amendment of the Government of India to the Trade Disputes' Act by which strikes were made illegal during the proceedings of Conciliation Court. Another resolution protested against the repressive measures directed against the working-class by various provincial Governments in the shape of promulgation of Section 144, arrests of picketers and the like in Congress as well as non-Congress provinces.

By another resolution the Bengal Jute Ordinance was condemned and its immediate withdrawal was demanded.

The workers of Cawnpore were congratulated on their struggle for their just demands and the conference protested against the refusal of Cawnpore employers to recognize the Mazdoor Sabha.

An interesting resolution was moved at the Subjects Committee of the Conference by Pt Raja Ram Shastri calling upon the Indian working classes to join the Congress, as the organ of anti-Imperialist fight. A resolution on similar lines was adopted at the UP Provincial Trade Union

Conference, held at Lucknow a few days earlier. The resolution was however rejected by the Subjects Committee of the Textile Workers' Conference.

Discussions on the resolution have given rise to a question that needs seriously to be considered. Whether or not the working classes should be trained politically and if so on what lines? There is an opinion in the country that the working classes must be made alive to the importance of the anti-Imperialist fight conducted under the banner of the Congress. It is felt that by keeping the trade union movement aloof from politics and by forcing it to a channel of economism, the working classes would be kept back from their historic role in the fight for freedom. There is, however, another aspect of the subject which too is worth time considering. It was after prolonged and strenuous efforts that unity in the trade union movement has been possible. Majority in the Federation group do not subscribe to Congress creed. They are opposed to allowing any Congress propaganda from the platform of Trade Union Congress. Is it then worthwhile to divide the trade union movement on political grounds? Would it not lead to another split that might do more harm than any real good? Both sides of the picture carry weight and force and it is for the trade union leaders in the country to find a way out of the difficulty so that on the one hand the Indian working classes may not neglect their proper role in the real fight for freedom and at the same time the unity in the trade union ranks may not be disturbed as a result of political differences.

3. Appeal to Labourers: Resolution of the Trade Union Congress, Punjab *Tribune*, 3 January 1939.

Rawalpindi
1 January 1939

'Beware of those leaders who pose before you today as nationalists and Congressmen and serve their own interests, hiding their communal tendencies in the background, and only vote for those candidates who swear to give a stiff fight to the unwanted Federal Scheme at the next Tripuri session of the Congress, unmindful of the personalities who support the introduction of Federation bereft of the objectionable items. Return true soldiers of the fight of freedom at this critical juncture of the freedom movement in India, in large numbers at the election of delegates to the Congress session where the question of Federation will be a live issue. Such candidates will be put forward by the Congress Socialist Party who will never yield to any persuasions or threats and will never accept the Federal Scheme in any case until an Indian Constituent Assembly decides the destiny of India.'

Thus declared Munshi Ahmed Din,¹ a prominent Punjab Socialist, moving a resolution today at the session of the Trade Union Congress. The text of the resolution is as follows:

'In view of the interests of kisans and labourers, this session of the Trade Union Congress places on record its appreciation of the struggle launched for the freedom of the country by the Indian National Congress. In its opinion, the Indian National Congress provides the only common platform for presenting united Indian demands and which will lead the country successfully to its destined goal. In the opinion of this session, an element has penetrated in Congress organizations whose interests are identical with British imperialism and their allies. Their presence in the Congress has always proved a brake on the freedom movement in the country. In its view this element should be purged from the Congress and this session demands that the Indian National Congress should accept the right of functional representation for labourers and peasants in the Congress organization in order to lead the struggle to a successful finish. Until and unless the Congress accepts this principle, this session of the Trade Union Congress decides to wage an uncertain war

for strengthening Trade Unions and other labour organizations to compel the Congress to accept their demands which are absolutely essential for the attainment of complete independence which is the Congress goal.'

¹ Munshi Ahmad Din (1906–1967); secretary, Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Ludhiana; published numerous articles in *Kirti*; arrested in December 1929, after the Saunders Murder; in 1935 he successfully attempted for the merger of the Provincial Socialist Party and the Radical League (Josh Group) and founded the Punjab Congress Socialist Party; organized election rallies during the 1937 election for the CSP candidates; he was the Chairman of the Reception Committee, CSP Conference, Lahore 1938; elected to the National Executive, CSP 1938; Munshi Ahmad Din in collaboration with the Kirti Group and Congress worked for uniting all the anti-imperialist forces into a United People's Front; Munshi Ahmad Din attended and addressed the Chhima Kalan (Jullundur district) conference and was imprisoned for making anti-Government speeches in 1939; along with Jayaprakash Narayan he was in Deoli Detention Camp; he applied for his resignation from CSP to Jayaprakash Narayan in August 1948.

4. The Labour Situation in UP: Harry Haig to Linlithgow, 10 January 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

[Extract]

The general unrest among industrial labour continues, and even perhaps increases. Here, again, I see not much prospect of improvement so long as the Ministry does not take a firmer line against those who stir up the trouble. Here in Allahabad a good deal of unrest among the workers in the numerous presses has been created by the activities of the communists. There is also some trouble about the coolies employed at the railway station. Here the view of our local officers is that the railway company is taking too stiff an attitude and that the coolies have grievances which ought to be remedied. In Lucknow an important press has closed down owing to constant trouble with its labour, and there is even a threat of a strike at the Lucknow Electric Supply Works, which would be a very serious development. I think the Ministers are watching this with close attention, and Dr Katju realizes very clearly that in the case of an essential public utility service like this the Government may have to intervene decisively, if necessary.

5. Report of the Non-Factory Workers' Conference

Government of Bengal, Home Political Deptt., File No. 209, 1939, NAI.

22 January 1939

Date and time : 22.1.39, 4.25 to 7.20 p.m.

Place : Town Hall

Audience : About 3,000, mostly labourers (the number swelled on account of Sunday).

President : Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.

Organizer : Bengal Labour Association.

The composition of the Conference Hall was the same as reported on 21.01.39 and the flags, banners and posters were the same as previously exhibited, except that a few posters with inscriptions in the Oriya language were added today.

The second day's sitting of the first session of the Non-Factory Workers' Conference was held this day at the aforesaid time and place. The President, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, arrived amidst shouts of 'Lal Jhanda Ki Jai' and loud acclamations at 4.20 p.m.

Slogans

Lal Jhanda Ki Jai,
Inqilab Zindabad,
Sarmayadari Barbad,
Rabidar Band Karo,
Trade Union Congress ki Jai,
Mazdoor Hukumat ki Jai,
Mazdoor Larai ki Jai.

Persons

Phani Ghose, Dayaram Beri, Balai Das Mahapatra, Dr Charu Ch. Banerji, Naba Kishore Dhal, Jagat Bandhu Dey, Murli Dhar Missir, Bikal Naik.

Volunteers

About 100 uniformed volunteers were noticed. An opening song was sung by a labourer in Bengali which was reported yesterday in full, purporting that the united labourers would conquer the world.

Gopi Nath Shaw moved a resolution in English and Oriya to the following effect: This conference of the non-factory workers of Calcutta formulates the following demands as the basis of their future struggle:

1. Recognition of union
2. Free Sunday
3. No appointment or dismissal without previous sanction of the union
4. Minimum wages of Rs 25 per month
5. Stoppage of bribery and other corruptions
6. Extension of Factories Act, Payment of Wages Act, Compensation Act to non-factory labourers
7. Right of franchise
8. Security of service after three years' work
9. Establishment of industrial courts for cases of wrongful dismissal and imposition of fines
10. Freedom of speech and association.

Speaking in Oriya, he asked the labourers to organize themselves and carry on their struggle on non-violent lines until their demands were fully realized.

Bikal Naik supported the resolution in Hindi. He said that the Government helped the capitalists in suppressing the agitation of the non-factory labourers. The zamindars sucked the blood of the ryots. The Government should look after the well-being of the hungry and naked people who constituted the ninety five per cent of the country's population. The Government should also protect the non-factory labourers against the high-handed victimization by the employers. The Government gagged the mouth of the hungry people when they endeavoured to speak out their grievances. It appeared from the laws of the government that the government existed for the capitalists, and not for the hungry and naked people. The government had supported the capitalists in disrupting the movement of the labourers for free Sunday, though this agitation was not against the interest of the government as well as the capitalists. The zamindars robbed the peasants of all their properties. The capitalists ruthlessly exploited the hunger stricken labourers. The Government and the capitalists regarded the labourers as beasts, although the latter were the motive force of

this world. The capitalists plundered the wealth of the world while the workers and peasants remained naked.

Damodar Das supported the resolution in Oriya and urged for a determined struggle of the labourers for having these demands fulfilled.

Phani Ghose supported the resolution in Hindi and explained the demands to the audience. He said that the Union had at present a large membership, ten thousand strong. The employers were compelled to recognize the mandate of the Union during their struggle at Kidderpore. The brave labourers, without awaiting the gesture of mercy from the Government and the capitalists, had established the general rule among these non-factory labourers of stopping their work on Sunday. He strongly denounced the oppressions of the employers committed on the labourers whenever they demanded their wages, and demanded an explanation from the Government as to why the non-factory labourers were not included in the provisions of such laws as the Factories Act, Compensation Act, etc. He condemned unwarranted and high-handed victimization of labourers and urged for statutory protection against this from the government. He said that the government had lent all its support to the employers in crushing these labourers. The police showed no concern in the fact that the employers robbed the labourers of their blood. In the circumstances they could not but feel that the present government furthered the interest of the capitalist and not that of the labourers. They would put an end to this exploitation by dint of their own unity and organization. Strongly demanding the freedom of speech and association for the labourers, he said that whenever they spoke through mistake and inadvertence anything against the government and capitalists, they were dealt with under section 124-A, IPC, section 144 and 107 and others were resorted to for suppressing their agitation.

Resolution was carried unanimously. Satyadeo Sharma moved a resolution in Hindi such as follows:

This conference places on record its opinion that the present Bengal Ministry resorted to a policy of repression in regard to the labour movement and that it has been promulgating sections 144 and 107 in various places to suppress the agitation of the labourers. Firing was committed on the labourers of the Bata Company and no attention was paid to what the poor labourers had to say. This conference declares that it has no confidence in the Bengal Ministry and demands that it should relinquish office.

Prem Sagar Singh supported the resolution in Hindi. The speaker said that the capitalists and Mahajans were always instrumental in promulgation of sections 144 and 107 for checking the labour movement. He complained that this day a constable of Kidderpore took him to police station and detained him for two hours. Irrespective of the fact that there would be firing and other repressions the labour agitation would not be suppressed so long as a government of the workers was not established in India. They should not worry on account of the repressions from the side of the employees. If the present government would tell him that it would establish a government of workers and peasants in India if he would mount the gallows, he would gladly do it. He would ask the Government how many capitalists worked as soldiers in its army. The workers and peasants were there and virtually maintained the government in this country. Sections 144 and 107 were employed against them. The day-to-day struggles of the labourers on small scale would augment their consciousness and courage and also prepare them for the greater struggle for independence.

Dayaram Beri supported the resolution in Hindi. He said that the labourers and peasants had been perpetually crushed under the wheel of repression of the zamindari and capitalist systems. The conditions of the masses had been degraded under these two systems. These miserable conditions would prevail so long as these systems were not destroyed. If the labourers and peasants

wanted to live in happiness, they would have to destroy the zamindari system and capitalist system. If they could destroy the British Imperialism both these systems would fall to pieces. The government did not allow the peaceful agitation of the Burra Bazaar labourers to continue, as it did not like it. It might have thought that the unity of the labourers would precipitate the downfall of the unstable ministry. Section 144 was brought into operation to prevent demonstrations of the labourers. Unless Section 144 was removed from the Indian Penal Code the people of India would not live in happiness. They should keep up their agitation so long as this section was not expunged. He then condemned the police lathi charge and the subsequent ejection of the strikers from the Shellac Factory. The labourers and peasants should unite and march ahead with full confidence in their own strength. If they were determined to give their lives, the government of workers and peasants would be established in this country without the least delay...

Resolution was carried unanimously.

Jagat Bandhu Dey moved a resolution in English to the following effect:

This conference demands the immediate release of the political prisoners in Bengal and calls upon the workers to render all possible help in this agitation.

Speaking in Bengali, he said that the labour movement in Bengal had come to an important place. The labourers should also express their solidarity and sympathy towards political prisoners who were repressed and had been languishing in jails. The Ministry had not released all prisoners up till now. The labourers should carry on agitation on the issue of the release of the political prisoners...

Dr Charu Ch. Banerjea supported the resolution in Hindi. The labourers, he said, should fight for the release of the political prisoners who struggled for the liberation of the country, because the labourers believed that independence was the first essential factor in their struggle for the establishment of a worker's government. The Ministry which was constituted of the agents of Imperialism installed itself in Bengal in order to oppress the people. The labourers would have to fight for the victory of the red flag which was dyed red by the blood of the workers and independence would be achieved with the blood of the working class. They should carry on such a virulent campaign that the *dalali* Ministry would bend to their will or would have to leave office.

The resolution was carried unanimously. Phani Ghose moved a resolution in English to the following effect:

This Conference denies the right of any outside body to make a constitution for India and declares that the constitution which India shall adopt shall be framed by a Constituent Assembly on the basis of adult suffrage. This Conference also condemns the Federation and calls upon the workers of India to resist the imposition of the same....

Kali Krishna Biswas supported the resolution in Bengali. He urged upon the labourers and peasants to enlist themselves as members of the Congress with the object of capturing and conducting the affairs of the Congress and of frustrating the conspiracy of the section of Congressmen to work out the Federation.

The resolution was carried.

Parmanand Rai moved a resolution in Hindi such as follows:

This Conference protests against the Bombay Trade Disputes Bill as it is opposed to the interest of the working class and appeals to the Bombay Government not to pass the Bill into law before the necessary amendments were made in agreement and consultation with the Trade Union Congress. This Conference further condemns the firing on the labourers by the police and strongly denounces the statement made by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel before the Enquiry Committee.

Muralidhar Missir, in supporting the resolution in Hindi, deprecated the action of the Bombay Government in supporting the cause of the capitalists....

The resolution was carried.

Dayaram Beri, moved a resolution in Hindi to the following effect:

This Conference supports the struggle of the subjects in the native states for the acquisition of democratic rights and extends its sympathy and solidarity to the courageous states people. The Conference also appeals to the AICC to withdraw the Haripura resolution denying the right of the Congress to organize the state subjects and to extend the right to Congress organizations to organize the state subjects under the banner and leadership of the Indian National Congress...

The resolution was carried.

The last resolution in English as below was moved from the chair:

The Conference congratulates the workers of the Bengal Labour Association Volunteers Corps for the success they have achieved and also calls upon all the labour unions to strengthen it in all possible ways.

Speaking in Hindi, he said that he was very much delighted to see the organized manner in which these volunteers were working. This was a good and necessary organization. All the labourers should lend to this movement their prompt and united support so that it would be possible to raise a corps of twenty to twenty five thousand volunteers. The volunteers would render their service in all affairs of the union.

The resolution was carried.

The President, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, in the course of his concluding address in Hindi, thanked the Reception Committee and all persons concerned in bringing about this conference, for having afforded him an opportunity to come in contact with the non-factory labourers. He had many doubts in his mind before he presented himself before this conference if these non-factory labourers had any spirit and enthusiasm and the aptitude for struggle to ameliorate their conditions. But his doubts had now been removed and he was convinced that these labourers had that fire in them. It appeared to him that their leaders had spared no pains in their hard work to rouse the consciousness of the non-factory labourers in Calcutta. Their awakening was further quickened by the stupidity of the employers as well as of the government. Leaders should spring up from among the labourers themselves so that they could conduct their struggle without anybody else's assistance. It was a very laudable spirit on the part of these labourers to regard their own union as their heart's blood. The volunteer organization was worthy of admiration and Balai Babu would train them up to work with the discipline of soldiers. In Bihar when there was strike or satyagraha or any form of struggle, the kisan volunteers dressed in their uniform would be mobilized as against the police of the government and the men of the zamindars armed with lathis. Wherever there was a strike or a conference of the peasants and labourers the capitalists desired that they should take recourse to violence. The volunteers were indispensably necessary for maintaining peace and order. The bombs, lathis and gallows of the government would not be able to crush the movement of the masses. In this slave country there occurred a constant struggle for attainment of independence. A large number of people still languished in prison. A large number had died on the gallows. The movement went from strength to strength. British Imperialism received a setback. The movement had increased on account of the blood given by the people and the self-sacrifice of the youth of this country. The mass movement could never die out. The masses, the workers and peasants were its fountainhead. In 1857, there broke out a struggle, but as the people were not prepared, it was put down with repression. The masses had awakened after seventy-five years. They should give no opportunity to the zamindars, Capitalists and the Imperialists to repress the people. So many soldiers had been sent following the death of a Political Agent. They (workers) should have their soldiers. It was the soldiers who protected the British Administration. The volunteers should perform the task of protecting the workers and peasants. The power lay in the hands of the peasants

and workers so far as the numerical strength was concerned. It was not with the government and the capitalists. The mills and factories were run with the co-operation of the working masses. They were only to withdraw this co-operation. If they were prepared and organized for withholding their co-operation at a single moment, the whole machinery would be paralysed. They should try to acquire this power. This repression and promulgation of Section 144 would forthwith stop when it would be brought home to the Huq Ministry that two to four lacs of non-factory labourers were organized in the Union. The Secretary of the Union would go to the employers and demand their rights on refusal of which he would tell them that the pressure of two lacs of labourers would stifle them, the British Imperialism and also the Ministry. A single letter from the Secretary of the Union would make the heart of the employers tremble and also the machinery of the government would shake. The workers and peasants should imbibe the luring faith that they must come victorious in their struggle and that their slavery would end. There would not be any compromise in the struggle of the masses against the Capitalists and the British Imperialism. Ultimately the masses would win. The hold of Imperialism on India would hardly exist for a few minutes on the day when the ignorance of the Indian people would be got over.

The Conference came to a close with a closing song in Oriya by five Oriya volunteers purporting that the capitalists exploited the labourers. The labourers had unfurled their flag of victory. All must join their victorious struggle for the realization of their demands. Continuous shouts were raised at the close.

Reporters Maulvis R. Ahmed, A Wadud and Babu Nirmal Chandra Dutta attended.

J.D. Dutt 22.1.39

S.P. Mukherji

S.I., S.B., 22.1.39

6. All to the Rescue: Plight of 8000 Jute Workers

Sharaf Athar Ali, *National Front*, 29 January 1939.

The basic cause of the recent strike of 30,000 Jute workers at Titagarh was the conspiracy hatched, in the form of the Black Ordinance, between the foreign Jute bosses of Bengal to maintain their bloated profits and the ultra-reactionary Huq Ministry to kow-tow and purchase the support of the rich while suffer whip-lashes for its own unnatural legislative stability.

The immediate cause of the strike, beginning in the Standard Jute Mill, Titagarh, was the victimization of six active trade union workers.

The workers of Titagarh, 30,000 strong, wrestled for seven weeks to protect their standard of living, their security of service, wrestled against unemployment and sweating and for their most elementary democratic right of trade union organization. They fought, in fact, a first-class political fight, they fought as the vanguard of the people of Bengal against the very same forces which have shackled the fair province, still darkened by the shadow of Clive, in a grip of unmitigated vice.

In the fight for these absolutely necessary economic and democratic rights the workers had pitted against them the whole ugly combination of the most ruthless economic and political forces to be found anywhere in India, or in the world, the Jute lords and the communal Huq Ministry. Not a single cunning device was left unemployed by these worthies in their desire to crush the workers strike-breaking communal disruption, arrests, lathi charges, false propaganda, convictions and terrorization—all these methods were freely used.

It was by such methods that the bosses and the Ministry wore down the workers, who fought stubbornly and heroically, splendidly overcoming communal incitement and provocation. Their

wonderful grit will serve as a memorable example to the whole people of India in the coming fights for democracy and the independence of the Nation against the entire band of foreign exploiters, against British imperialism and its gang of communal and princely lackeys. The Jute workers give a superb demonstration.

But the fight has not ended. Work was resumed in all the Titagarh Mills by the 2nd of January. No sooner had the bosses gained the upper hand than, with all the vile propensities and vindictiveness of the bully, with the suavity of the slimy bourgeois, they began to single out the most advanced cadres of the workers for victimization. They picked upon 8000 men. Madrasis and folk from the UP and Behar, who had come to work and settled down in Titagarh a full generation ago. All the stored-up venom of the white bloodsuckers descended upon these men and their families. They were summarily refused employment. Not only that the Jute firms began to clear them out of the dwellings owned by the Companies. These men are now utterly destitute and homeless.

We owe a duty to these 8000 people. Today, it is them, tomorrow it will be you and me. Today, the Jute workers are suffering, tomorrow it will be the textile workers or the railway workers. Sometimes it is the Trade Union, at another time the Kisan Sabha, then again the political prisoners or students or it is the Congress, but ever it is some section of the single living body—the Indian people. The struggle for economic and democratic rights on every front is the fight for the uplift and Independence of the country, the one and indivisible, against the same hydra-headed enemy in whichever park of the country he may appear. Already the Bengal Congress, Rashtrapati, Subhas Bose, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, have appealed for help. To them let us earnestly add our voices. Every organization must send money and material aid to the Bengal Provincial TUC and the Bengal Provincial Congress for the relief of the heroic Titagarh workers. These premier working class and people's organizations have opened funds for the purpose. One and All for the Rescue!

Nor must the Huq Ministry and Jute bosses be allowed to get away with it. The workers have suffered a temporary setback. The Jute Ordinance will now be brought into full operation causing immense havoc to thousands of lives. Learning the lessons of the last struggle, it rests with the people of Bengal, with every class and political organization in particular the Congress, to prepare from now for helping the Jute workers to gain all their demands and redress their grievances as a part of the general drive for the economic prosperity of the masses and for bringing down the reactionary Huq Ministry. All must prepare from now for the coming battles!

7. Police Rule in Gokak

National Front, 5 February 1939.

In Gokak, in an outlying corner Karnatak, a conspiracy is at work. It is a plot to smash the Union of the textile workers of Gokak Mills, to render bread-less 1450 workers, who have for years worked in those mills. It is a monstrous attack on civil liberties. Sixteen leaders of the Gokak Mills Workers Union have been served with notices under the District Police Act. IV of 1896 to remove themselves from the Belgaum district within 48 hours. The most surprising point about these notices is that they prescribe the places to which the deportees must remove themselves and also the route which they have to take. This is exactly the manner in which the reactionary Government of Hotson and Bell was using the Emergency Powers Act of 1932.

In the notices issued to these labour leaders allegations are made against them. It is stated that they are indulging in 'improper and illegal' activities. These are detailed as follows:

1. Intimidation of mill workers by the threat of physical violence, thereby depriving them of liberty of action to reside and travel as they chose.
2. Incitement of mill employees to violence and riotous conduct within and about mill premises thereby interfering with the peaceful and continuous working of the workers in the mills.'
3. Extortion of monies from mill workers who display unwillingness to conform to the activities of the aforesaid body of persons.

Can these allegations be proved in a court of law? They cannot be. Otherwise cases would have been launched against these labour leaders. The procedure followed by the bureaucracy under a Congress Ministry is the same as in the days of the former reactionary ministries. Draconic use is sought to be made of the District Police Act. Labour leaders who are backed by the support of the overwhelming majority of the workers of Gokak mills are being removed from the district, and restrained in some other, without trial and inquiry.

It is a disgrace that such a monstrous curtailment of civil liberties should take place under a Congress Ministry. It is a still greater disgrace that an influential section of the leadership of the Karnatak Congress headed by Sjt Gangadhar Rao Deshpande should be at the bottom of this conspiracy to oust the Labour leaders from the Union from the district and the Congress itself.

Mr Shamsuddin and the other 5 leaders are all members of the Congress. Mr Shamsuddin has been returned to the KPCC and has a substantial support among the newly elected members of the KPCC. In spite of this fact no move is being made in Belgaum to fight the illegal orders issued against the Gokak leaders.

The BPTUC has taken up the cause of the Gokak workers. A deputation of Bombay Labour leaders is to wait upon the Ministry. In the meanwhile the situation in Gokak has become critical after the 24th when the leaders were removed from the district. 011; the 26th comrade Sohni and 35 other workers defied the ban on meeting and staged a demonstration against the rule of Police Zulum which the Congress Ministry is supporting there. They have been arrested.

The Civil Liberties Union must take up the cause. The obnoxious use of the District Police Act to curtail the Civil Liberties of workers, to smash their right of organization must be challenged in a court of law.

8. The Heroic Workers of Alleppey: N.C. Shekhar

National Front, 5 February 1939.

Alleppey is the biggest industrial centre in Travancore.

In all the Coir factories inclusive of European companies the system now at work is the piece-wage system. Contractors or Canganies are the chief agencies to recruit labour and also to control labour inside factories. Due to this, a part of the workers wages goes to the contractors or Canganies as commission fee for recruitment. Overtime work is extracted though not paid for. Payment of wages is not in cash but in kind except in certain European owned factories. There is no safeguard against suspension, dismissal or fines, no fixity in the standard of wages. Ordinary human facilities, as are found in British Indian factories, are not allowed in the Coir factories of Alleppey. Freedom of press and other elementary rights of the working class have been most cruelly suppressed. Recently enacted Labour laws instead of giving protection to the working class interests have further helped the employers to tighten their grip on labour.

Past History

The working class of Alleppey have been insistently agitating for the last 30 years with a view to finding a way out of the horrible living conditions. The answer to their innumerable resolutions and memorials to the Government for all these years has been ruthless persecution. It was four years ago, round about 1934, that the workers resolved through the medium of their Union executive to send a deputation of 50 representatives in a jatha to Trivandrum, 80 miles south of Alleppey, in order to see His Gracious Highness and represent before him their various grievances. But the 'Dharmarajya Government arrested the leaders, branded the workers' deputation as disloyal and illegal, and issued prohibitory orders that no working class meetings or demonstrations could be held in Alleppey or in any adjacent places. The plea was that they were hostile in nature, consequently prejudicial to public tranquility. The Executive of the Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union called for a general strike. Propaganda meetings and demonstrations were set afoot. The autocratic Government of Travancore went in for repression on a large scale. In Alleppey the factory owners lost no time. They effected cuts in wages, increased hours of work and imposed arbitrary fines. Suspensions and dismissals of those who dared to protest against the high-handedness of the employers were the order of the day. The double offensive of the capitalists and the Government turned the working class to bay. They defeated the ban order which had been curbing tier civil liberties unceasingly. A militant demonstration was held in the streets of Alleppey. The police came out with its lathis and charged on the demonstrators. Bava, a rank and file worker who resisted bravely the callousness of the police, was killed. Many were injured. The cold blooded cruelty aroused protests all over Kerala.

Recent History

In August 1938, on the eve of the struggle for Responsible government the executive of the Coir Factory Workers Union adopted a resolution that unless the Travancore Government took speedy measures to relieve the miserable condition of the workers, a general strike would be launched. Thus 40,000 factory hands were roused to action. Then came the political struggle launched by the Travancore State Congress and five labour leaders were arrested soon after in that connection. But the general strike slogan gathered strength in spite of the usual objections from interested quarters.

The political struggle in Travancore came suddenly and rapidly, sweeping the land from one end to the other, shaking the very foundations of the feudal autocracy. This quickened the working class to action. On the other hand the military and armed police were let loose on the masses like a pack of hungry wolves on innocent lambs. Savage lathi charges and mass arrests became once again the order of the day. Meetings and processions, and even distribution of leaflets were banned all over Travancore. It was in this atmosphere that the strike struggle was launched.

The task of organizing a Central Strike Committee of 100 class-conscious workers was carefully completed. Regional Committees in Muhamma, Shertalley and several other working class centres were set up. A Red Volunteer corps of 300 workers was quickly formed. Thus fully prepared, the working class of Alleppey launched its grim struggle in October 1938. Thousands of workers marched in formidable array, and flooded the streets in demonstrations, escorted by the Red Shirts.

The workers laid down their demands: minimum wage of Rs 30, 8-hours working day, abolition of piece wage system; removal of Canganies and contract system; maternity benefit; free education to workers' children; free housing facilities; social insurance; provident fund; old-age pensions, etc. There were political demands also. They demanded that all political prisoners should be released, repressive laws and ordinances withdrawn, freedom of organization, press and speech restored and steps should be taken immediately to grant Responsible government on adult franchise basis.

The Offensive against the Working Class

On the birthday of the Maharaja the Government was forced to release political prisoners and unconditionally suspend all ban orders for the time being. Now efforts were concentrated on the working class. On the day of the general release five lorry loads of military were transferred to Alleppey and the armed police was reinforced. A workers procession was brutally lathi-charged. It lasted for an hour. Grave injuries were inflicted on over 300 workers. Mass arrests followed. The same evening the military opened fire on workers demonstrations in two other places one in the heart of the town and the other at the south end. Five were killed on the spot and more than eleven fatally wounded. Not satisfied with the cold-blooded crime, the police advanced with the aid of military contingents to raid the workers' volunteers camp and office. All who were found there were severely man-handled and arrested. Some were dragged from the office and pulled down on the road through the railing of the upper story of the building. Workers' quarters received worst attention. Food and movables were looted, women molested. One of our best comrades K.K. Warrior, was taken into custody and inhumanly beaten inside the police lock-up along with 230 brave working class comrades. Justice is not expected. And this is not all. Alleppey and the surrounding places were flooded with CIDs. A reign of terror has been established. But in spite of the atrocities of the Government no change in the strike situation has taken place. All the efforts of the Government as well as the capitalists have been in vain.

The Government has now published a communiqué announcing that a committee of five members, with equal representation to the capitalists as well as to the workers with an official in the chair, has been appointed to enquire into and report on the labour conditions in Alleppey. Following this the capitalists notified a six and a quarter per cent increase in wages. All strikers were promised reinstatement without victimization. The owners agreed to abide by the findings of the Enquiry Committee and consequent action by the Government. The strike committee decided to call off the strike.

Breach of Faith

In spite of the strike being called off the capitalists are continuing their offensive against the workers with the support of the Government. In two months, more than 200 workers have been victimized, 150 have been arrested. The Enquiry Committee is still in session.

But with all this the class-conscious revolutionary workers of Alleppey are still militant and full of fight. Demoralization has not been allowed to set up. The Union is taking effective measures to safeguard its strength.

Long live the brave Alleppey Workers!

Victory to our 'bhooke bandi' of Travancore!

9.(a) Chittivalsa Police Firing: Bureaucracy Running Amuck by K. Satyanarayana

National Front, 26 February 1939.

The Cause of the Strike

Chittivalsa Jute Mills, witnessed a ghastly firing on workers on 14th February. The trouble arose with the removal of a weaver, by name Appanna getting a pay of Rs 27, and his appointment as a 'learner' on a pay Rs 7/8. The authorities alleged that he was not turning out satisfactory work. The worker explained that the fault was not due to his incapacity, but due to the speed of the machine and the quality and tension of the jute fiber. But the authorities gave a deaf ear and

insisted that he could not be taken back as a weaver. The action of the mill-owners is in direct violation of the recommendations of the Enquiry Committee, appointed by the Government, which has laid down, that a worker cannot be dismissed from his work or any punishment given him before obtaining a written statement. The rest of the 300 workers of that section also downed tools and staged a stay-in-strike at 4.30 p.m.

Then the authorities stopped work in all the sections of the mill and all the 3000 workers of the mill went on a stay-in-strike and refused to evacuate the mill compound. The workers were determined to remain in the mills even without taking their meals.

Police and Bureaucratic Officiousness

Reserve police came to the scene by evening at 6.30 p.m. At 7 O'clock the Tahsildar of Vizianagaram, who was also there, advised the workers to go home, take their meals and come back, if they wanted to continue the strike. Some 50 workers were taken in by his words and went home. On their return, they were severely beaten and charged with lathis by the Reserve Police stationed at the mill gates. Some 13 workers received serious injuries.

By 10.30 p.m. the Deputy Collector of the district was there. The Tahsildar went to Vizianagaram to confer with the President of the Labour Union Mr K. Subba Rao, Congress MLA. The District Collector came at 12.30 in the night. By that time, the workers were in complete possession of the mill and were almost asleep on the ground.

Ruthless Massacre

Exactly at 12.45 all the lights in the mill were put off. The reserve police began their work of massacre in the presence of the District Collector himself. The Agent of the Jute Mills was also present there. The Police fired into the roof. Many workers woke up at the sound. All the three gates of the mills were closed except the one which the Reserve Police was guarding with the help of battery lights. The Police fired 10 rounds on the helpless workers who were running for their lives in darkness. The workers somehow managed to come out receiving serious injuries. By the time the President of the Union came there at 1 O'clock, accompanied by the Tahsildar, the Police and the Collector were searching in the mill compound for any stray workers inside the mill. The President of the Union actually witnessed workers who were running away being beaten by the Reserve Constables.

As a result of this ghastly firing, one was killed and 20 others seriously injured. A total number of 100 workers received considerable injuries. All the workers reported immediately to their Union and all the details of the firing are in the office files. No first aid was administered and many were later admitted into the Bimlipatam hospital. The workers are very firm and united 2000 workers attended the meeting held on the evening addressed by Socialist workers of the district and pledged themselves to continue the strike.

A Repetition of Chirala

Exactly a year ago, the police and bureaucracy in concert perpetrated a shocking Crime when they took the lives of three innocent workmen in Chirala. In spite of universal and strong public protest that deed was exonerated by the Horwill Report. The storm soon blew over. People said, let bygones be bygones. But now scarcely has the memory of that crime been obliterated when with even greater savagery, with great brazenness, the Madras police and bureaucracy has a second time played havoc with the life and limbs of factory workmen.

But can we still continue to palm off the blame on these gentlemen as heretofore. A Congress Ministry has been in Office for two whole years in Madras. The Ministry should have had enough

time to curb the murderous propensities of these repressive instruments; but this killing of our workers here speaks for itself.

We call upon the Madras Congress Ministry to fulfill its pledges to the people, we call upon them not to repeat the shame of Chirala. The workers and all the people this time demand real justice and not the Chirala mockery. Further, we draw the attention of the entire people of India, of the Congress and all anti-imperialists to our plight. We say that not only have our fellowmen been killed in our province a second time but that police and bureaucratic rule still reigns supreme in Madras despite the sweet words and 'labour policy' of our Congress Ministry. For here there was no communal riot, no provocation, no challenge to the authorities but a straight forward industrial dispute.

(b) Conspiracy of Death: K.L. Narasimham

National Front, 19 March 1939.

Chittivalsa is a village 12 miles from Vizianagaram in Vizagpatam District (Andhra). Messrs McLeod & Co. of Calcutta are the Managing Agents of the Chittivalsa Jute Mills. The number of workers employed here is 3200. In these mills, there is no security of service, no provision for sick leave, no leave with pay on any occasion.

In short, all the handicaps which the Jute workers of Bengal suffer are present in Chittivalsa with the addition of disadvantages accruing from remote and isolated location.

In the year 1937, the workers organized themselves into the Chittivalsa Labour Union in order to be able to collectively bargain with the Management for better conditions of work.

Notorious Jute Ordinance Again!

The basic offensive of the management began last year in the endeavour to extend to Chittivalsa the same policy as embodied in the terms of the notorious Bengal Jute Ordinance. On April 26, 1938, the management issued a notice of its decision to abolish the group system of work, that in future the mills would work 54 hours per week instead of 59 on a single shift. This immediately entailed a retrenchment of 260 workers. Attempts at negotiations having failed, the workers resorted to strike as the last weapon.

This strike lasted for nearly three and a half months from April–August 1938. It was only when the Madras Government decided to appoint a Court of Enquiry that the workers agreed to resume work. Despite popular wishes the Congress Ministry appointed a bureaucrat, K.B. Javad Hussain Khan ICS, instead of a non-official Committee.

Findings of the Court

Briefly, the Court found that: 1. There had been no victimization of trade unionists in carrying out the retrenchment policy. 2. The retrenched men could not be re-engaged all at once but that preference in re-engagement ought to be given according to length of employment. 3. *The workers ought to be given 10 days casual leave with pay in the year.* 4. *Before dismissal 15 days notice be given to workers who have put in 2 years service or 15 days wages in lieu of notice.* 5. Punishment can only be meted out after the worker has been provided an opportunity of explanation.

The recommendations were quite unsatisfactory in the main but the workers and the Union decided to accept them, having already resumed work. Soon after it was fully established that the Management openly did not want to implement the findings of the Court, they said so in a statement to Government and continued in practice to impose upon the workers the old conditions.

Present Dispute

On February 12th 1939, the Management on the pretext of low output reduced Madimi Appanna from a weaver to a learner with the result that his pay was reduced from Rs 27 to Rs 7. When Appanna protesting submitted an unimpeachably perfect technical explanation, he was dismissed. The other workers in the department, rightly anticipating in the circumstances the same treatment for themselves supported Appanna. Their representation too was rejected, thus forcing them to stage a stay-in-strike at 1 p.m. on the 14 February 1939. At 4.30 p.m. the management declared a complete lock-out in the mill. The workers en masse determined to offer satyagraha.

Police take a hand

At about 6.30 p.m. the Reserve Police armed with guns arrived at the mills. The Tahsildar who was on the spot succeeded in persuading some workers to go home for their food and to return later if they wished to continue the strike. Thus about 50 workers taking him at his word went out. But on their return they found all the entrances barred by the police. On attempting to get in they were first prevented by the police and soon evoked a severe lathi charge. 13 were injured. At about midnight the District Collector came on the scene. On authentic information, the lights were put out all over the mill at 12.45 a.m. This caused confusion and the workers tried to come out through the only gate which was open. The battery lights of the Reserve Police were directed on the crowd going through the gate. The police fired 10 rounds. When the President of the Union, K. Subba Rao, MLA, arrived at 1 a.m., it seems that the Collector and the police were searching for stray workers and as they streamed past they were being beaten by the police. By such Chicago-like methods the mill compound was cleared.

The brutality of the police caused the death of one worker named Inti Satiah, wounded 20 seriously and altogether 76 reported their injuries to the office of the Labour Union.

Situation unbearable

From the foregoing it is quite clear that at every stage the Management was the guilty party. The happenings on the 14th night inside the mill compound cannot be described otherwise than as a conspiracy of death, brutally executed by the Jute bosses and the bureaucracy on helpless workmen. The workers in the Chittivalsa labour dispute found themselves in that same grip of vice which has millions of our exploited countrymen in Bengal at its utter mercy.

The Jute ordinance, that deadly contrivance of the foreign Jute lords and the reactionary Huqites, like a slippery snake, was able to extend its poisonous fangs to even distant Chittivalsa, finding in the Madras bureaucracy a reliable friend.

But for the workers of Madras, whether in Chittivalsa, or Chirala or in the city itself, the situation is becoming unbearable. The Madras Government in October 1937 enunciated a policy of settling industrial disputes 'internally'. But this wish has remained only on paper. In almost every industrial dispute so far, whether here, or in Chirala, or at the Diocesan Press in Madras and in other instance, the police and bureaucracy have butted in with bullets, playing havoc with the lives and limbs of sons of our own soil, the very people who by the sweat of their brows produce our wealth which finds itself into the coffers of a gang of foreigners. In almost every instance the Congress Ministry has either exonerated the bureaucracy or submitted often against its own recommendations to the dictates of the bosses.

The industrial position in Madras is now no longer the concern of a locality, it disturbs the equanimity of people all over the country: it is now the immediate business of the All India Trade Union Congress, of the Congress Committees and of all progressive people. Without drastic steps

against the exploiters and the bureaucracy, without popular legislative measures in the spirit of the aims of the Congress and the emancipation of the masses of India, the situation cannot be remedied.

10. Problems of the Industrial Workers, an Article by Dr H.P. Dastur

Indian Social Reformer, 18 March 1939.

I lay stress on improving living and working conditions. This is the only way I see for an amicable settlement of capital-labour trouble, for it is the only way that can benefit all concerned—the workman, the owner, the industry and the State—and such a reform must go by this axiom if it to succeed as a permanent measure. For such a success, the State, the owner and the workman have to work in complete co-operation. Broadly speaking, improvement of living conditions should be primarily the concern of the State, but the owner must be there to help the State with full-blooded co-operation. Improvement of working conditions should be the responsibility of the owner, but the State should back him up with all its organized machinery. To give concrete examples. It is for the State to tackle the problem of nutrition. The State must make available for industrial districts proper sorts of food, and undertake intensive organization for increasing the quantity of milk produced, improving its quality and bringing it within easy reach of the industrial worker. This is bound to take some time. But at present a whole lot of useful buttermilk is going waste in the country. The State can begin tackling this problem by transporting such buttermilk at cheap rates into industrial districts. That done, the employer must co-operate by distributing such food through his canteens and his crèches, and by organizing a noon-day lunch of the right sort for the workers.

Education is another item the State must tackle. Primary education should be compulsory and the employer can help the State by converting his crèches and canteens and dispensary into centres of anti-natal and post-natal clinics, kindergarten and Montessori classes, and sanitary instruction.

Any attempt by the owner to improve working conditions will require medical examinations of his workmen. Such examinations are bound to pick up every now and then workmen suffering from tuberculosis and similar other disabling diseases. Such workmen are working not from any love for their work, but because they have only two alternatives before them—to die of the disease or to die of the disease plus starvation. They naturally prefer the first. If the owner discharges them, (and that is the only thing he can and must do) it is bound to cause trouble all round, unless the municipality and the State co-operate with him and enable the owner to refer such cases to a proper hospital or institute where the workman should obtain, at the least, appreciably better comforts and facilities than anything he can get at his own home. Such a co-operation between State and owner would benefit all concerned. The workman will get the attention he badly needs, the owner will replace an inefficient worker with an efficient one which will mean better production for the industry, and over such policy the State will find that year after year it has less and less of such diseased workmen to take care of at public expense. There is a whole lot of avoidable illness which can be removed this way, and then alone will it be possible to evolve a workable scheme of sickness insurance for the worker. More than that, it is only then that the State, the owner and the workman can and will be ready and willing to pay their share towards the working of the insurance scheme.

But what part should the workman play in such a reform? I have been doing some work in industrial medicine for the Tata Hydro-Electric Companies. I have come to certain conclusions as to how this work should be done. Sir Thomas Legge, a physician, senior medical inspector of factories of England, and medical adviser to the Trades Union Congress, has done a huge amount of work in this line. In 1934 he published a book on industrial maladies. Therein he enunciates a few axioms which should be adopted if industrial medicine is to show one hundred per cent

success. What little experience I have in the same line goes to confirm the truth of those axioms. The one on which he lays most stress is 'unless and until the employer has done everything—and everything means a good deal—the workman can do next to nothing to protect himself, although he is naturally willing enough to do his share'. The second axiom is, 'If you can bring an influence to bear external to the workman (i.e. one over which he has no control), you will be successful; and if you cannot or do not, you will never be wholly successful'. To give concrete examples, it is no use asking the workman to use a mosquito-net and take quinine. Even to supply him with these things would be useless. The thing to do is provide him with mosquito-proof houses and destroy all breeding places of the mosquito from around half-a-mile area of his quarters. If it is a question of dust (causing lung diseases) it is no use asking him to use a respirator. The work-room should be rendered dust free. If it is glare damaging his eyes, everything should be done first to remove the source of the glare before asking him to wear goggles. If night work is causing eye-strain, some research work should be first undertaken to study the position, nature, intensity, colour, etc., of the light supplied to the workman before asking him to use glasses.

I am doing some amount of work in the line of accident compensation. In the case of one woman, I had to certify one hundred per cent disability. The award came to near Rs 1,500. The Commissioner of Compensation refused to pay her cash, but told her to go to her village and buy a plot of land, and then approach him through village authorities for payment of the price of the land. This was a move in the right direction. Had he paid her cash, she would have been robbed of all the money within one year, leaving her a beggar and a drag on society. The same will happen to the textile worker if all that is done for him is to pay him a little higher wage.

This industry is at present paying maternity allowance. This helps nobody, not even the woman who receives the allowance. In a great majority of cases it is grabbed by the husband to do what he may like with it, but despite the allowance, the woman lives the same life, eats the same food, works or does not work in the same way as she did when she had no allowance. The allowance in no way helps her to improve her efficiency, enrich her motherhood, or better her progeny. I do assert that the one and most important and urgent thing to do is to take all care of the pregnant woman, and nursing mother. My methods, however, differ. I would collect every pie that is now paid as maternity allowance, and as much more as I can possibly draw out from the State and the owner, for one can never be doing enough in this line. A mother is a national asset, the one main source of national wealth and energy. I would turn all the money into pure milk, and make sure that every ounce of it goes into her stomach, by distributing it through a place I can control. The crèche would come handy. Cash payment of maternity allowance is a drag which a sorely tried industry can ill afford. But if the allowance was given as suggested above, it would benefit all concerned. The woman will get the one chance she urgently needs for improving her efficiency and her progeny. The owner will lay a solid lasting foundation for obtaining an efficient workman in future, the State will get a better citizen, and the industry will profit through better co-operation that will follow between the workman and the owner.

The crèche as managed at present is another drag on the industry, for it is run on lines of charity and not of industrial medicine. Its main activity seems to centre round giving its inmates milk of doubtful quality and perhaps a bath. This sort of expense brings no return to the owner or benefit to the industry. But a crèche to be really useful and beneficial to all concerned should be a centre or anti-natal and post-natal clinic for the pregnant woman and nursing mother, a centre of education for the children on kindergarten and Montessori line, and a centre for intensive propaganda for all on subjects like nutrition, prohibition of drink, sanitation, etc. It should be in charge of a person trained in welfare work on lines of industrial medicine and in modern systems of education. Such a crèche would of course require all the co-operation that the State can give the

owner before it can develop to its full height. Such, and such a crèche alone, can be of any use to all concerned. Money spent on such a crèche would in time return to the industry with compound interest. That seems to be the experience of all those who have worked a crèche on these lines in Europe and America.

It is sometimes said that the administrative cost of welfare work would be prohibitive for an industry like the Bombay Textile Industry. I do not know. Perhaps that may be so when such work is done through outside agencies, or when they are run on lines of charity and not of industrial medicine. In a way, the name 'welfare work' itself is a misnomer. 'Efficiency-drive' work would be a better one. But the co-operative society of the Tata Hydro-Electric works, is run by an honorary committee drawn from the staff of the Company. Their administrative cost is negligible, and they do not merely dole out money to applicants. They follow up each applicant's activity at home and at work and give help only after satisfying themselves that that same will go towards his uplift. It is however, quite true that the major part of work in Industrial medicine calls for a heavy initial expense, and sometimes even the running expenses is a formidable item. In one camp of the Tata Hydro-Electric Company, we are spending every year over Rs 2,000 on anti-larval work only, and all that for a population of only 300, all told. Yet the authorities are satisfied that this is money well spent, and it seems to be the experience of all those who are doing a large amount of work in Industrial medicine in Europe and America that it is a sound investment for every industry to undertake.

It may also be argued that the Bombay Textile worker is full of distrust against the owner and is not likely to take kindly to such activities, and he becomes all the more suspicious when the owner tells him that he proposes to do anything for his welfare. The best way to disarm him of his suspicions is to start work in Industrial medicine on a broad basis in co-operation with the State, no matter what the difficulties may be in the beginning. It is the experience of all those who have worked in this line that the benefit that such work can distribute all round, soon tempts everybody concerned to come running to offer his full cooperation.

The urgent need of the hour seems to be an inquiry as to how the State and the owner should co-operate with each other in order to increase the efficiency of the industrial worker. When the two between them have played their part fully, the workman will have an irresistible case for an increase in his wage, the industry will be in a strong position to afford it, and the owner will gladly pay it, for, by then, he will fully realize that to do so is to adopt one sole way of increasing still further the workman's efficiency, and the industry's profits.

II

A living wage standard is one that would secure such living and working conditions as would enable the workman to keep fit mentally, morally and physically, and to do his work efficiently. Such a wage will have to be paid partly in kind and partly in coin. To give the workman only a little more money, leaving all his other living and working conditions where they are present, would enable the employer to cry out with enough justification that he cannot afford it, and tempt the workman too with some justification to ask for still more. If by living wage is meant only a little more money for the workman, it will not help efficiency in any way. The ratter amongst the workmen will only spend more on drink, litigation, useless injection, still more useless patent medicines, bad food, etc., and his efficiency will degenerate all the more. The steady and sober amongst the men will save the extra money in order to take a longer holiday than that he is used to in order to get out of his trying living and working conditions; or he will send a little more money to his village, but he will just do nothing to improve his efficiency unless the State and the employer come out to help him in the right way. But if by living wage is meant improving his

living and working conditions that would certainly improve his efficiency and that without adding a pie to his wages. Prohibition, proper residential quarters with enough air, light and water, wholesome food, etc., would improve his living conditions to a great extent. Occupational diseases are causing inefficiency, and they are preventable. Bad conditions of air, light, humidity, etc., are other sources of inefficiency. The workman has certainly a case for higher wages. But higher wages can improve his efficiency only if he is set going on correct lines of living and working conditions. This is also the only way in which the employer can afford to pay higher wages. Bad living and working conditions lead to a progressive mental, moral and physical deterioration and all round inefficiency which higher wages by themselves cannot remove.

If one is after improving the living and working conditions of the workman, there will be no need to fix the composition of a standard family. But if one is only after finding out how much money the workman should be paid, a group of four—man, wife, and two children—may prove a workable standard.

As for housing, if the idea is to find out how much rent he has to pay for a sanitary quarter and count that in the computation of a living or minimum wage, it is not going to answer. Supposing he is spending at present Rs 2 on rent and it is found that at least Rs 5 are necessary to obtain for him a suitable quarter, and Rs 3 extra are added to his wages on account of housing, he will still continue to live in the same place, and use the extra three Rupees in any way except for improving his efficiency or health. His sanitary sense is not at all developed. The thing to do is to set about earnestly developing this sense in him through education, and, till that happens, the State and the employer should take it upon themselves to house him in the proper way. The useful and helpful thing to do is to carry to his doors proper clothing and fuel through a co-operative society in the mills or near his houses failing that, the State should intervene to put down all exploitation, especially of the poorer workman by the merchants. House-lighting should be provided for him by the employer or the State until such time as proper sanitary sense is developed in him.

Transport: The workman generally prefers to stay even in a dirty hovel near the mills rather than live in a better place far away from the mill. This is chiefly to save time and partly to save expense. If the workman is given a sanitary dwelling-place near the mills, the question of transport will not arise.

Holiday: A fortnight's holiday every year with pay would make for efficiency. At present inordinate absenteeism is one of the troubles of the owner. A holiday with pay may help the owner indirectly also if it were made conditional on a certain amount of regular work during the year.

Expenditure on medical relief: This should be borne purely by the State and the employer, or a sickness insurance scheme should be worked out where the workman pays a small sum as an insurance against sickness and something like a panel system now in vogue in European countries may be adopted.

Insurance, interest on and repayment of debt, social and ceremonial expenditure—these items can be worked through a co-operative bank, preferably in charge of the Millowners' Association in the same way as the insurance business of the mill is run by them.

Human needs and rights of a workman are the same all over. To that extent the provisions would not differ from centre to centre. But prices of food and cloth are likely to be different from centre to centre. There would be some variation on that account.

If it is a question of improving the workman's living and working conditions, it will probably be found that with improvements in such conditions it will not be necessary for his wife to go to work, and it will be best for all concerned to let her mind her home and children. If she must work, I would rather she engaged herself in some cottage industry at home. She goes to work

generally because the family in the present state of living and working conditions cannot make both ends meet. But if it is only a question of paying a little more or less in wages, leaving everything elsewhere it is, wages of other members of the family should be taken into account.

I am in favour of establishing a minimum standard of living and working conditions which the employer must fulfil before he can start a mill. When that is done a minimum wage would find its natural level without any trouble and to the satisfaction of both sides, for that would add to the efficiency of the workmen and the progress of the industry. But if the only idea is to find out how much money he should be paid as a minimum wage, leaving everything else where it is, it is not going to lead anywhere. On the contrary, that will make confusion more confounded, for without adding anything to his efficiency it will only whet his appetite for asking more and more from an employer and an industry which can afford less and less.

The minimum wage must be based on the principle of helping him to improve and keep his efficiency at a high level by keeping himself fit mentally, morally and physically.

A research department under control of the State which should be constantly working to find out what reaction the worker's efficiency has on the machine he is working and vice-versa.

To relevant the minimum wage from becoming the maximum, profit-sharing should be introduced.

The first charge on the finances of the industry to set it going should be for up-to-date machinery, proper living and working conditions for the workman and administrative charges. Once it begins to make profit the first charge on the profit should be a certain fixed interest on capital investment. Any profit over and above that should be divided into four suitable parts, one part for capital invested, one for the workman, one for such indirect welfare measures as are suggested here, and one for renovating machinery and other unforeseen expenses.

A very great majority live in single room tenements. A great majority of these rooms give lodging to more than one family. It should be compulsory on the employer to provide housing accommodation for his workers, and the State should see that they are of the right sort.

11. Labour Movement

Searchlight, 21 March 1939.

Patna
19 March 1939

For the first time perhaps in the history of labour in this province, a procession of women labour paraded the streets of Patna City in the afternoon on 19th March shouting labour slogans and carrying Congress and labour flags.

A procession of men-labourers was also taken out. The procession terminated at the Mangle's Tank where a big public meeting was held under the presidentship of Mr Rambriksh Benipuri.

Jayaprakash Narayan, addressing the gathering, congratulated the mill-workers for organizing themselves into a union here. It was a step in the right direction which they had taken for the redressal of their grievances. If the labourers wanted that their condition should be improved, they must have a strong organization of their own. Continuing, he said that labourers had every share in the wealth of the country. Mines, mills and other industrial concerns did not belong to individuals who alone should enjoy the benefits accruing from them. All industrial enterprises belonged to the labourers who must have equal benefits and equal share in the industry. It was necessary that they should be organized into unions, otherwise they would be exploited by the capitalists.

Continuing, he said that the kisans, the mazdoors and other people formed the bulk of the Indian population and when Swaraj would come, they would really be benefited. Swaraj meant that country's wealth should belong to them and not to the few capitalists.

12. S.C. Bose on the Jamshedpur Workers: Statement to the Press

Searchlight, 2 April 1939.

Jharia
1 April 1939

A warning to workers of Jamshedpur against resorting to wrong tactics, such as boycott of the recent Tata Centenary Celebrations, is given by the Congress President, Mr Subhas Bose, in a statement issued this afternoon.

Mr Bose says, 'After my release from internment in 1937, I was approached by several friends in Jamshedpur with the request that I should visit the place and resume my old connection with the workers' organization there. But I did not feel any urge to do so in view of the dissensions among workers.

In fact when I was in Europe till February 1936 I advised my Jamshedpur friends to dissolve the Labour Association, of which I was the President because the existence of the Labour Association and of the Labour Federation was weakening the cause of the workers.

At that time my advice was not heeded by the supporters of the Labour Association who did not have confidence in Mr Homi¹ and who did not, therefore, like to leave the entire field to him.

Perhaps they were right and I was wrong.

After that Mr Abdul Bari² began to take an increasing interest in the cause of the workers of Jamshedpur and under his leadership a new organization grew up. As this organization began to grow in influence the other organization like Mr Homi's Labour Federation, Mr Giri's Metal Workers' Union and the Old Labour Association began to lose ground. As a matter of fact, most of the supporters of the Labour Association, including its Secretary, enthusiastically joined the new Union of Mr Abdul Bari. This had my approval. I was delighted beyond measures when I found Mr Bari taking so much interest in the cause of Jamshedpur labour.

Mr Bari is an old friend of mine and in the Congress we have been working along the same lines ever since Swaraj Party days (1922). Moreover, I have great regard for his character. He is bold, upright, honest, fearless and self sacrificing and has a truly non-communal and non-provincial mentality. That such a person should espouse the cause of Jamshedpur labour was a great gain for the latter.

For some time things went on well and Mr Bari's organization began to progress by leaps and bounds. Though I did not visit Jamshedpur myself, not having been officially invited there by the workers, I, nevertheless, gave my full support to Mr Bari and advised all my friends who still cared for me that they should also support Mr Bari. Unfortunately in recent times I have been noticing a change in the methods of Mr Bari.

During the last months on two occasions I was able to help in bringing about a settlement between Mr Bari and the Tata Iron and Steel Company represented by Sir A.R. Dalal. On both occasions I found the attitude of Sir A.R. Dalal to be conciliatory and compromising and I am sure Mr Bari will bear me out when I say this. The change that I noticed in recent times in the attitude of Mr Bari was as follows. Instead of doing the right thing and persuading the workers to do the right thing Mr Bari began to show a tendency to submit to whatever the workers said whether it was right or wrong, reasonable or unreasonable.

It was like playing to the gallery as they say in order to win cheap popularity. This was one of the fatal defects in Mr Homi besides other shortcomings of which Jamshedpur labour knows quite well by now. I was considerably pained to see Mr Bari developing one of the defects of Mr Homi. Matters came to a head in February last when Mr Bari publicly announced that the workers would boycott the Centenary celebrations in honour of the founder of Jamshedpur, J.N. Tata,³ which were due to begin towards the end of February and continue for a week. Perhaps Mr Bari thought that this was a novel way of putting pressure on the Company.

This method did not appeal to me. Not only was it unfair, unreasonable and improper but it amounted to misleading and misguiding the workers. In a country like India where Trade Unionism is still in its infancy we who call ourselves Trade Unionists have a great responsibility in the matter of guiding the workers along right lines.

It would be wrong to try to hit the employers by all possible means, fair or foul. Our hands must be clean as also our methods so that even if we have to fight the employers hard we may be able to fight them clean. If at any place the employers are not clean there is no reason why we would imitate them. There was no sense in boycotting the Centenary celebrations. It was the duty of the workers as also of the Management to pay homage to the memory of India's premier industrialist who built a modern industrial city out of a jungle and provided all of them with bread.

Reference was made to me by several people as to whether they should join the boycott of the Centenary celebrations. Feeling that such a step would be wrong and unjustifiable, I sent the following telegram from Calcutta to Mr Bari on February 21, 1939:

Professor Abdul Bari, Jamshedpur, Hear reports that you are advocating boycott of Tata Centenary celebrations. Whatever our differences with the Company on labour questions for which we are entitled to fight them it would be wrong and improper to boycott a non-controversial function like the Tata Centenary. Nothing should prevent our paying homage to the memory of India's premier industrialist. I earnestly request you to reconsider your attitude. If still unconvinced kindly see me here.

My telegram had no effect on Mr Bari but he was kind enough to come and see me the next day. I was then lying ill after my return from Wardha, nevertheless we had a long talk. Mr Bari admitted that his policy was wrong but he regretted that he had proceeded too far to withdraw at the eleventh hour. I tried all my power of persuasion but I failed. Subsequently I heard that the boycott was carried out as decided on previously and that in consequence the management cancelled some of the items in their Centenary programme.

'My object in issuing this statement is to give a friendly warning to the workers of Jamshedpur that this sort of policy is quite wrong and will do no good to them. It will bring about further estrangement between the workers and the Company.

'Let us not consciously or unconsciously imitate only any of the tactics of Mr Homi. Let us be honest and straightforward and build up our Trade Unionism on the right principles. Only then shall we be able to fight successfully both the employers and the Government and our cause—that is the cause of the workers—will be sure to triumph in the long run'.

¹ Manik Homi; Parsee and lawyer, studied in the US and was employed like his father by TISCO. He, however, appeared as witness before the Indian Tariff Board against TISCO, accusing the company of employing an excessive number of workers leading to higher production cost; soon after this, he was discharged and his father was also forced to resign. At that point Homi became an ardent enemy of the Tata management and took an active part in the strikes against TISCO.

² Abdul Bari (? –1947); born in Koilwar in Shahabad district of Bihar; did his MA from Patna University in 1919 and left his law study to join the non-cooperation movement. His political life began during the Khilafat and non-cooperation movement; was the joint secretary of Bihar Provincial Khilafat Committee; served as a professor in the Bihar Vidyapeeth

in 1921; he favoured the Council-entry and was elected to Secretary of Swarajya Party in Bihar in 1923; also a member of Indian Independence League formed by J.L. Nehru and S.C. Bose. He was elected member of Bihar Legislative Council but resigned his seat in 1930, re-elected in 1937 and became Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. He was one of the moving spirits behind the formation of the Bihar Socialist Party in 1931 and was appointed president of organizing committee in 1946; he was elected President of BPCC and accompanied Gandhi in the healing tours of riot-affected areas in Bihar in 1946. But his chief contribution lies in the field of labour organization and in bringing the labour force into the national movement. Following the great economic crisis of 1929, a prolonged strike was launched by the workers of the Tinsplate Company and Bari made his debut in labour union work during this crisis. He formed the Tata Worker's Union in 1936; was also president of some fifty other labour unions in Bihar and Orissa. From 1936, he became a popular labour leader in the coal, iron, mica belt of South Bihar; criticized Congress Ministry of 1937 for neglecting working class completely. He also evinced great interest in agrarian matters and advocated the cause of peasants during agitation against water tax in Shahabad; also established a branch of Village Industries Association in Sasaram in 1932. Condemned separate electorate for Muslims and urged them to join Congress. Met a tragic death on 28 March 1947 (mistakenly shot dead) while traveling from Dhanbad to Patna.

³ Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata (1839–1904); a pioneer in modern industry and founder of one India's most forward-looking business organization, was born in 1839 at Navsari, Gujarat. He had a most rudimentary education in his home town but later joined Elphinstone College, Bombay. Jamsetji's education was cut short within two years when circumstances forced him to enter his father's business of trade with China. In 1877 he established the Empress Mills at Nagpur; in 1886 the Dharmasi Mill at Kurla and Advance Mills at Ahmadabad; established Iron and Steel factory at Jamshedpur, Bihar, and later Institute of Science at Bangalore. This way he contributed a lot for the economic and scientific development of India. He died at Bad Nauheim on 19 May 1904.

13. Gokak Mills Workers, February–April 1939

AITUC Papers, File No. 61, Part I, 1938–39, NMML.

I This meeting of Gokak workers declares its full confidence in the BPTUC and supports the demands put forward on our behalf by the deputationists that waited on the Prime Minister.

We declare that we shall abide by the advice given by the TUC and will work under no organization except a proper trade union organized by the TUC.

Gokak Falls, Mardi Math

20th February 1939.

II Note on my visit to Gokak.

(by Jamnalal Mehta)

02.04.1939

As I had to go to Akola I can not be present for the BPTUC meeting of April 5th. I am putting down some notes on Gokak, which is on the Agenda.

The BPTUC had appointed a committee by its ... resolution dated 13th January (1939) of the following to see the Labour Minister in connection with the Gokak Dispute. The Deputation saw the Prime Minister, Mr Kher on 20th February. The Labour side were present, Mr J. Mehta, S.V. Parulekar, S.A. Dange,¹ K.N. Joglekar² and the last on being a member of the Gokak Union. On the Govt side were the Hon. Prime Minister, the Hon. Mr Munshi,³ Mr Nanda,⁴ Mr Wakis, Patel, Secretary, Mr Jennings the Labour Commissioner.

The subject matter of the Deputation was the dismissal of 1500 workers in the Gokak Mills, The application of 144 to the area police cases against about 30 workers and ... deportation of some.

Govt held that a section of the workers led by doubtful element like Mr Samsuddi engaged in stone throwing and rioting and hence the dismissals, Sec. 144 police cases and deportation.

The deputation while replying to all the objections of Govt emphasized one point particularly, that of ... re-engagement of the 1500 workers. The Minister, while holding out no promise advised that workers should present themselves for work and the management would select them for

employment. The intention of the employers was to keep out about 200 or so of those who were definitely Mr Samsuddi group causing unrest. The rest would be absorbed.

I could not visit Gokak immediately for private reasons. I went to Gokak on 23rd February.

I met all the leading workers in the union office which is housed in a hut in the Mardhi Math colony and explained to them the point raised in the meeting with the Ministers.

I had also a long talk with Pundlikji who was supervising the working of the mill and the newly engaged workers in so far as the dispute was concerned. Pundlikji was first a member of the KPCC. But, now, since the new elections in the KPCC in which the old committee lost power to the new, he is functioning as a nominee of the Gandhi Seva Sangha.

As I could not held a meeting in Gokak, I wrote down my views and the course of action I proposed that the leaders there should advise the workers to follow, and left Gokak the same day.

I understand my note was discussed. But the decision as to whether to follow it cannot be depended entirely on the advice of the Samsuddi and his friends. I am informed that Mr Samsuddi declined to advise the men to seek employment unless the Mill dismissed the new workers *en bloc*.

To my mind in the circumstances it was an impossible procedure. For the simple reason that out of 3200 people that the Mill requires for its full working plus bundles. On the day I visited Gokak about 2000 were already working. Then out of the 1500 dismissed 400 would have been immediately absorbed. My information was that about 200 had migrated, and 400/500 were getting partial employment in the surrounding villages, from which about half the labour in the Mill is recruited. Thus, if partial working by the dismissed people had been resumed, it would have left about 400 people's problem at hand.

The colony, where these workers are staying has managed to live on for almost four months with a population of about 1200 workers. It would not have been difficult for 400 men to continue for a month more, when others of their batch had got employment. I had suggested that those who can—should get employed, continue peaceful working for one month, showing that the charges against them that they were unstable and violent were unfounded. After that through their union they should present a demand for the reemployment of the rest. But this for some unknown reasons, was unacceptable to Mr Samsuddi. The only group who could get the thing carried out was that of Mr Sohoni, of the Gokak Union, but he was in jail for defying Section 144. He is now out having completed his imprisonment.

The present position is that the Mill is working almost with full employment. Sjt Pundlikji has started another union (It may be noted that the other Union has had a chequered history, being in the hand of Mr Samsuddi, who once followed the NTF, then went out to the Congress, opposed the 7th Nov. Strike, then broke with the KPCC and Gangadharrao Deshpande. And declared for the TUC. The Union is not affiliated to the BPTUC. In our interview with ministers, the Prime Minister and the Home Member had made several charges against Mr Samsuddi and his friends. Our deputation made it clear that we were neither defending nor opposing Mr Samsuddi and his group.

These dismissed workers are housed in the Mardhi Math, a religious monastery. The collector is asking for the removal of the colony, since the land is agricultural and has been used for non-agricultural purposes for building a village for semi-permanent huts. There is likelihood that they may have to vacate which is likely to lead to another clash.

There are many more things to be said. The militancy and solidarity of the workers is admirable. But sometimes the dispute develops into a feud between rival villages, and trade unionism goes into the background.

The stops that the BPTUC should now take on this question I cannot indicate because it is now one and a half month since last I had been there. So no course of action can be suggested by me unless the change in the conditions there are again assessed.

¹ S.A. Dange (1889–1991); prominent Communist leader; founder-member AITUC and Communist movement in India, 1920; editor, *Socialist*, 1922–24; main accused in Kanpur Conspiracy Case, 1924, as well as in Meerut Conspiracy Case, 1929; the pioneer in organizing the Bombay textile workers and leading them in their historic strike of 1927; founder of the famous Girni Kamgar Union, 1928; member, AICC, 1928, 1929, 1936; Bombay Legislative Assembly, 1946–51, and Lok Sabha, 1952–62, 1967–71; President, World Federation of Trade Unions, 1943; Chairman, CPI, 1962–81; expelled from CPI, 1981, formed All India Communist Party and elected its General Secretary, 1981, one of the founders and Chairman, United Communist Party of India, 1989; publications include; *Gandhi versus Lenin*, *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*, *Mahatma Gandhi and History*, *Gadgil and the Economics of Indian Democracy* and *Origins of Trade Union Movement in India*.

² K.N. Joglekar (?–1970); he came into the working class movement in Bombay in the early 1920s; served in Maratha daily *Indu Prakash* before joining S.A. Dange's trade-union activities in 1923, and was one of the founders of Workers' and Peasants Party in Bombay in 1926. In the same year he became an executive committee member of the CPI and took a leading part in the Bombay Textile Workers' Struggle. When the Girni Kamgar Union (Red flag) was founded in 1928, Joglekar became its Vice-President. He also organized the GIP Railwaymen's Union—a formidable organization of 41,000 workers. He was arrested in the Meerut conspiracy case in 1929 and spent 12 years in prison along with other leaders. He was in the forefront of the workers class protest against the 'Imperialist' War in October 1939. In 1947, he was elected Vice-President of the AITUC in Calcutta. In later life he joined the Forward Bloc and became its General Secretary.

³ K.M. Munshi (1887–1971); born at Broach, Gujarat; educated at Broach, Baroda and Bombay; elected to the Bombay Legislative Council 1927, but resigned on the Bardoli issue, 1928; participated in the Salt Satyagraha and was imprisoned in 1930; Secretary, Congress Parliamentary Board, 1934; member, Bombay Legislative Assembly, 1937; Home Minister in the B.G. Kher Ministry; founder Bharatiya Vidyabhawan, 1938; offered Individual Satyagraha and was arrested, 1940; organized 'Leaders Conference at Delhi' for the release of Gandhi and others, 1943; defence counsel of Quit India Movement Conviction Case, 1943–44; Member, Constituent Assembly, 1946–50; member, Provincial Parliament, 1950–52; Agent-General of Government of India in Hyderabad, 1948; Minister of Food, Government of India, 1952; Governor, UP, 1953–58; Executive Chairman of Indian Law Institute, 1957–60; left the Congress in 1960 and joined Swatantra Party; author of several books in Gujarati and English.

⁴ Gulzarilal Nanda (1898–1968); born in Sialkot, Punjab (now in Pakistan); educated at Lahore, Agra and Allahabad; research scholar at Allahabad University on labour problems; Professor of Economics at National Congress, Bombay, 1921; joined Non-Cooperation movement, 1921; imprisoned for satyagraha, 1932; and imprisoned again from 1942–44; member, Bombay Legislative Assembly, 1937; Parliamentary Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 1937–39; Secretary, Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association, 1946; Labour Minister, Bombay Government, 1946–50; Secretary, Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh; President INTUC; represented India in the International Labour Conference, Geneva, 1947; in 1950s, he joined the Planning Commission as its vice-chairman and in the following year, appointed as Planning minister in the Indian Government and later given charge of Irrigation and Power; was Union Minister for Labour and Employment 1957–62, 1962–63; Minister for Home Affairs, 1963–66; acting Prime Minister of India, 1964 and 1966.

14. Report of the General Body Meeting of the Lal Bawta Press Kamgar Union, Bombay, 3 April 1939

AITUC Papers, File No. 61, Part I, 1938–39, NMML.

The annual meeting of the general body of the union was held on the 3rd April 1939, when Com. S.G. Wakankar, the General Secretary, laid the report of the work done by the union since 3rd April 1938, which runs as follows:

Comrades,

On 3rd April 1939, general body was held and the new executive was elected. We feel happy in placing before you the report of the work done by us during the year.

This year our union participated in the observance of the various days like May Day, Anti-Federation Day, Anti-War Day, Sholapur Prisoners Day, and Day observed to lift the ban on the Communist Party of India.

In the National Week, workers of union enlisted Congress Members in different parts of the city, with a view to secure Civil Liberties, to make Indian National Congress a forceful weapon in the struggle against imperialism, and to fight repression. The union supported the Communist candidate who were contesting Tripuri Election. We are glad to announce that one of our Ex-Secretaries, Com. K.G. Lotankar has become successful in the election to the D Ward District Congress Committee. During this period 15 meetings of the Managing Committee and one of the General Body were called: An attempt was made to co-operate with the Government Printing Press Workers' Union. A warning was given to the press workers against the various unions started for the sole purpose of disrupting the labour movement. Ignoring the press workers union of Bombay—the premier body of the press workers, who has conducted their struggles for so many years, Congress Socialists have tried and are trying to start the unions of various presses, one for the *Times of India* Press Workers. We can boldly state that the policy of the Congress Socialists will destroy the unity of the press workers. Our union has participated in the welcome of Swami Sahajanand, Dr Suresh Chandra Banerjee, Com. Sardesai, Com. Minakshi Karhadkar and Com. Huddar. Workers of the union actively supported the communist candidates of the election to the Corporation. Our union enjoys a franchise of 4 votes. *Press Kamgar*, the tri-monthly, edited by Com. Dhole used to be of immense help to the workers of our union. The Trade Dispute Bill sponsored by the Bombay Government in order to illegalize the strikes of the workers, was strongly resented by the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress. According to the resolution of that body, majority of the press workers took part in the general strike of the 7th November 1938. Rania Committee appointed by the Government to investigate into firing done on that day was completely boycotted.

Day-to-day grievances of the workers

Six complaints were lodged to the Factory Inspector regarding the regular payment and application of the Factory Act in respect of 60 to 70 presses. Notices were served on twelve presses including the following prominent presses:

Nava Bharat, Janma-Bhoomi, Turf,
Vakil & Sons; etc.

Wages of the workers were recovered by adoption of Court procedure against the owners of about 10 to 12 presses including *Induprakash*, Associated Advertisers, Metro, etc. About 9 to 10 owners of the pressed have been served with notices regarding the payment of workers. This year the union also conducted one strike.

A memorandum depicting the condition of the press workers has been prepared by the union to be sent to the Ministry for its perusal. A Provincial Committee has been set up to convene a conference of the press workers in this presidency to back this memorandum. Our Com. Wakankar is the Secretary of this Committee. The workers of our union are enthusiastically taking part in the literacy campaign. This year we have enrolled nearly 160 new members.

Before closing we must cordially thank on behalf of our Managing Committee Auditors, Messrs K.B. Joshi & Co., Advocate, Mr M.B. Sakhalkar, BA LLB, and also other innumerable workers who have helped the union.

General Secretary.

15. On the Phoenix Mills: S.A. Dange to K.M. Munshi, 16 April 1939

K.M. Munshi Papers, Roll No. 29, File No. 43, NMML.

After I left that note with you at your office in the Assembly Hall I was called away to Manmad. So I could not put before you the further problems regarding the Phoenix Mill.

I am sure you must have taken steps to inform Mr Divatia about the arbitration and the settlement of that day. I hope Mr Divatia will find time to go into the matter as early as possible.

The next question in which you must interest yourself urgently and seriously is that of reopening the Mill. The workers have been asked to take their wages and quit by a notice posted at the mill. We are advising the workers not to receive their wages until the question of reopening and of arbitration is settled.

That is my opinion but it will be decided in a workers meeting as soon as I reach Bombay on Monday, the 17th.

I am sure you are aware of the practice that when a mill is closed due to depression and when it reopens the same old hands are taken back to work and no new recruitment is done. I hope Mr Ram Nivas will stick to this recognized practice. We are of course posting observers to see that the mill is not opened in violation of this law. I propose to meet you in the Assembly Hall in recess time to fix up appointment if required ...

It is so difficult to see you at your place because of the absence of any bus-service on that side and a private motor car on our side, taxis being too costly for a number of visits which a settlement of this kind always necessitate.

16. May Day Message for India: Joint Manifesto Issued for
May Day by Jayaprakash Narayan and P.C. Joshi

Bombay Chronicle, 28 April 1939.

This year's May Day finds the Indian Working Class on the threshold of a new and decisive struggle. It will have to prepare itself for meeting the new offensive of wage cuts, which the Textile and Railway bosses are preparing to launch. It will have to play its part in the nation-wide attack for which the Indian people and the Indian National Congress are preparing to assert their right to independence and self-determination.

A year of widespread economic struggle is behind it. These fights embraced an ever-broadening strata of workers in backward parts and industries. For the first time workers in Bihar, Malabar, Tamil Nad and in Andhra have entered into the fray. Workers in backward industries are lining up.

Unity of the Central Trade Union Organization, achieved a year back, has given a new impetus to the struggle and organization of industrial workers throughout India. New Unions are springing up in backward industries. Rival unions are closing their ranks. Unitedly the workers are beginning to fight for labour legislation and for their democratic rights.

Last year the Indian Working Class secured significant victories in the political arena. It showed that it was able to rally the sympathy and active co-operation of the people in general in the defence of its condition of life and labour. The glorious building of the Congress Labour Unity in Cawnpore, Chalisgaon, and the growing association between Labour and Congress in the struggle of the Jute workers in Bengal are significant landmarks.

In the gigantic upsurge of the people of the States, the workers have whole-heartedly thrown in their lot with the democratic struggles of the entire people against the rule of these princely autocracies. The Textile workers of Rajnandgaon and Rajkot and the Railway workers of Kathiawar,

40,000 coir factory workers of Travancore have by their initiative and struggle identified with the popular struggle of the 80 million people of the states for democratic rights.

These gains have to be carried forward. The base of Trade Union Unity has to be widened and made more stable organizationally, greater political initiative and action in building Congress-Labour Unity—greater efforts in participating in all national political demonstrations under the Congress—is the need of the hour. Only if the Working Class develops greater political activity and achieves Congress-Labour Unity, will it be able to play its rightful role as the initiator of the united front of the people in the coming struggle against Imperialism.

The Indian working class has joined its powerful forces to the forces of democracy and freedom, precisely at a moment when the people of the world are menaced by the dangers of Fascist enslavement, and the peace of the world is threatened by the catastrophe of a new imperialist world war.

In the words of Stalin the second Imperialist war has begun. Already 500 millions of people have been drawn into its orbit from Shanghai to Gibraltar. The pro-Fascist agents, henchmen of the Finance capitalists in Great Britain and France are driving the Fascist mad-men to a war against the Soviet Union.

Under the guise of the policy of 'non-intervention' as in Austria, Abyssinia, Spain, Czechoslovakia, China, so in the Balkans today, the Chamberlain and Daladier agents of Fascism are preparing further to betray the small nations and democracy in the cause of peace and to divert the Fascists of the so-called 'anti-Comintern' 'bloc' against the Soviet Union.

Thus they hope to save themselves, to crush their own people at home and to destroy the Soviet Union—the Socialist Fatherland of the Workers and toiling people of the whole world.

On this May Day limits of this terrific onslaught of the dark forces of barbarism, the workers of India greet and confirm their undying support to the land of completely victorious socialism, of freedom and prosperity and greatest peace. They acclaim the wise leadership of the beloved leader of the peoples, Com. Stalin. The working class of India and the whole people this day pledge their honour to defeat any imperialist-fascist war plans against the USSR.

The workers and people of India greet and confirm their undying support to the heroic people of Spain, the unconquerable people of China. The united national struggle of the people of China serves as the truest source of inspiration, as the surest guide to the whole people of India in the tactic of United National Front. In the successes of Chinese people the people of India see a vindication of their own historic struggle.

May Day places the heaviest responsibility on the shoulders of the Working Class and of the entire left to maintain Trade Union and political unity in its own ranks, to consolidate its own gain and those of the entire nation to be able to function more effectively in the coming battle, to come forward as the unifier of the people. To fulfil these tasks, the first necessity is Socialist Unity. The entire experience of the Working Class of the world, which is our own experience inescapably lead us to this single conclusion.

17. Textile Strike Begins at Nagpur

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 3 May 1939.

1 May 1939

About 8500 textile workers employed in the Empress Mills downed tools this morning. They went in for work as usual, but refused to work. By 10 am however, the stay-in-strikers came out.

The other textile mill in Nagpur, the Model Mills, is unaffected and is working normally.

The strikers demand the appointment of a Conciliation Board by the CP Government to investigate their demands, including recognition of the Nagpur Textile Union, fixation of minimum living wage, one month's leave with pay in the year, security of service and no wrongful dismissals.

The strikers ignored the advice of their leaders to postpone the strike and rejected the Government Labour officer's assurance that the Government were now examining their demands and struck work.

The strikers will decide further line of action at the 'May Day' labour meeting this evening.

18. Workers' Right to Strike

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 3 May 1939.

2 May 1939

Various suggestions for improvement of the lot of workers and labourers were made before the Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee today by the Bihar Press Workers' Federation and Digha Workers' Union. Only two members of the Committee, Mr H.B. Chandra and Mr R.K. Saran, were present.

Messrs Parmanand and Ehasan Ahmad, when examined on behalf of the Press Workers' Federation, said that workers and labourers should have absolute right to go on strike. The strike should be declared when seventy or seventy-five per cent of the workers were not willing to work. When the remaining workers expressed willingness to join work, they should be prevented by strikers to do so by means of peaceful picketing. Motor buses should not be allowed to enter factories in the course of the strike.

They further suggested that the Factories Act should apply to all factories whether machines were used therein or not. Legislation should be made to give workers and labourers the right to sue employers in law courts without payment of court fee for the recovery of arrears of their wages. They further suggested that piece system in presses should be abolished at once. Workers should not be required to work for more than six hours daily.

Sj. Narainjee, on behalf of the Digha Workers' Union, suggested for compulsory arbitration to decide the Labour Dispute, provided parties were not willing to come to terms by and arresting many strikers and suppressing every form of Union activity and externing almost all Union officers and workers.

You would certainly remember that ten thousand petroleum workers have been on a lawful strike for about six months and fighting for their just demands against tremendous odds, seldom any other strike has been conducted in so thoroughly business-like way from the very beginning. Seldom all conceivable avenues for settling the dispute by negotiations and conciliations have been so systematically explored as in this strike. Probably no other strike achieved a cent per cent solidarity uniting Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs, Nepalees, Assameese, Gorakhpuries, Bengalees, Punjabies, Madrasis and Biharis under one flag of the Union. Yet perhaps no other strike had to face so much determined opposition of the entire vested interests, mainly alien, the combined offensives of oil magnates, tea planters and other capitalists and the imperialist steel frame.

The strike was essentially economic. No political issue was involved in the strike. Yet the nature of the imperio-capitalist industry, the hitherto-unchallenged supremacy of the vested interests in the Planters' Raj of Assam, the very thoroughness of the workers' organization, the admirable Hindu-Muslim and inter-provincial unity and their fighting capacity brought the imperialists and the bureaucratic machinery to the aid of the Assam Oil Company. All combined to teach lessons to the strikers who ventured to fight for their just rights so unitedly and efficiently to the admiration of even opponents in the Planters' Raj of Assam.

The remarkable strike and subsequent firing attracted all-India attention. Almost all office-bearers of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee and the Assembly party issued even public statements demanding of the Assam Ministry to transfer forthwith the local authorities responsible for the tragic happenings and to appoint an independent Tribunal to enquire into the firing and to prosecute the Company's officer involved in the shooting of workers. But the ministry was helpless against the opposition of the bureaucratic steel frame. Despite mandates from the Assembly party it could not transfer even a single ordinary Police sub-inspector.

Persistent agitation bore some fruits very late. The Congress President Dr Rajendra Prasad intervened but he failed to bring about a settlement owing to the adamant attitude of the Company and its refusal to abide by even Government conciliation. The Company was evidently not in a hurry owing to the powerful backing. But Rajendra Babu's statement vindicated the just stand taken by the strikers. The Working Committee passed a resolution in the last week of June directing the Ministry to enforce by legislation the decisions of the Conciliation Board and to cancel the lease to the Company on its termination. The Ministry took one month in appointing a conciliation Board with terms of reference quite unfavourable to the strikers. The Board submitted its report one and half month ago generally supporting the workers' demands within the limited terms of reference. The Committee of Enquiry's report regarding the Union's complaints against police and military is also likely to vindicate the workers stand. The Sessions Judge of Assam Valley Districts recently delivered judgment holding the Magisterial enquiry into the Digboi firing substantially defective and ordering for a retrial.

So just when everything was turning favourable to the strikers after so much bitter and long-drawn struggle, drastic measures have been adopted to the full benefit of the Company, the offending party, suppressing the strikers and their Union and leaving the vindictive Management free to victimize thousands of workers according to their sweet will even regardless of larger war requirements, thereby nullifying all the effect of the Conciliation Board and the Committee of Enquiry appointed by the Government of Assam. The Ministry was not even consulted in all these vital matters affecting seriously its administrative and labour policy. The Ministry had no say in the externment of the Secretary from Assam and other Union officials from Dibrugarh Sub-Division, in the promulgation of orders under Sec. 144 CrPC by the local Magistrate and in the vesting of wide powers on the same local authorities whose conduct during the strike has been under investigation by the Committee.

It is deplorable that at a time when the British Government has declared war with the ostensible objects to defend democracy, to resist Fascism and defeat any attempt to settle a dispute, not by conciliation but by force, drastic measures have been taken without even any formal consultation with the Assam Ministry responsible to the people. The Assam Government has thus undone all that has been done so far by the very Government in settle the long-pending dispute and to meet the insistent public demand for an independent Tribunal to enquire into the firing and other charges made by the Union against the conduct and activities of the local authorities during the strike. All these measures have been taken on grounds of war situation, although the strikers repeatedly expressed their readiness to resume work only if the Company was willing to restore the status-quo, a fairly recognized principle in all such disputes, leaving the main dispute to be settled according to the recommendations of the Conciliation Board and the Committee of Enquiry. But instead of persuading the Company to agree to that reasonable proposal, the starving strikers are being forced to surrender unconditionally leaving behind thousands of victimized strikers.

The WC and the AICC ought to therefore direct the Assam Ministry by a clear resolution to resist firmly any such interference in its administrative and labour policy and undue application of war emergency measures and to implement without further delay the AICC last resolution 'to

forthwith undertake legislation for making the acceptance of the decision of the Conciliation Board obligatory', to enforce the fair principle of status quo, to give effect to the recommendations of the Committee of Enquiry and 'to take steps to stop the renewal of lease to the Company'.

The Ministry should be also directed to pass orders forthwith to the local authorities to withdraw orders under Sec. 144 CrPC, to permit normal functioning of the Union, not to interfere with the ordinary civil liberties of the strikers and citizens or to take any extraordinary measures without the previous permission of the Ministry. The Ministry should also urge upon the Viceroy to restrict the scope of the Ordinance strictly to the need of the hour and a particular situation, to withdraw the ban on Secretary of the Strike Committee and all Union officials and workers, to permit the Union officials to remain in the area to arrange for the *retrial* ordered by the Sessions Judge who recently held the Magisterial Enquiry into the Digboi firing substantially defective, and to settle the dispute in the interests of justice and equity, industrial peace and efficient production.

It is also high time the Congress should open a special *Relief Fund* in aid of the stranded, victimized and oppressed workers who have fought so peacefully, unitedly and efficiently for so long against overwhelming odds and sufferings. Awaiting your whole-hearted support,

Yours fraternally,
Sudhindra Pramanik
General Secretary,
Strike Committee of the AOC Labour Union,
Digboi.

19. Cawnpore Mill-Strike Echo

Searchlight, 10 May 1939.

Cawnpore
9 May 1939

With regard to the Victoria Mill strike, the labour Commissioner, in the course of his finding says, 'In my opinion a strike of this nature makes it difficult for any conciliation machinery to operate and is very much to be deprecated. It seems to me that the best thing now would be to leave the matter to the parties concerned to settle as they think fit.'

In view of this, the management has decided to re-open the mills on Monday, May 8, when all those who struck work will be taken under conditions which obtained immediately prior to the strike. If work is resumed the management will then be prepared to give full consideration to any grievances which the workers may consider to have.

The Employers' Association hope that the workers will appreciate this gesture on the part of the employers.

20. On Trade Union Policy

Article by B.T. Ranadive, *New Age*, Vol. 5, No. 12, May 1939.

May 1939

1. The proletariat, led by its party, must play a decisive role in the struggle for national and social emancipation. It must act as the guide and unifier of all the fighting forces against the ruling reaction. Disunity in its ranks, and political immaturity, are invariably attended by disastrous consequences—the triumph of Fascism and reaction. The maturity of the working class to shoulder

its historic responsibility and unify the people in action at any given stage of the struggle is the one condition of its success.

2. The task before the Marxist Party, therefore, has always been to win the majority of the Working class for its programme, policy and tactics. The task has been to achieve the political unification of the proletariat under the banner of a single party. Before the party can lead the people, it must learn to lead the proletariat.

3. 'Without daily work among the broad masses, without daily struggle for the defence of their living interests, the Communists in laying claim to the leadership of the masses, can only isolate themselves. This daily work is a necessary pre-condition for us, if we are to prove ourselves to be the party of the workers, and win the confidence of the majority of the working class.' (Kuussinen at the XII plenum.) The establishment of a permanent living link between the party and the majority of the working class is ensured only through mass trade unions, which lead the overwhelming numbers in their day-to-day conflicts, with the established order. The strength of the revolutionary party lies in the trade unions and the influence it exercises through them to activate the entire mass of proletarians. The weakness of the German CP in the TU proved fatal not only to the working class but to the entire mass of German people.

4. Trade unions and the economic struggle led by them thus constitute the main lever to move the working class as a class. They form the basic condition of its political unification and after the only training ground for workers to gradually realize the political responsibility resting on their shoulders. Absence of permanent trade union organizations and joint economic battles are signs of extreme backwardness of the movement. At this stage the workers form an 'incoherent mass' immune to revolutionary influence and organization.

5. This rise of trade unions in post-war India and strike struggles round which they centred marked the beginning of a new chapter. Their significance lay in the fact that the class which is historically destined to play a decisive role in the anti-imperialist struggle, had started moving and laying a basic foundation for fulfilling that role. It was this knowledge that made all working class revolutionaries devote in the beginning their exclusive attention to trade union struggles. Where other parties saw mere economic struggles or a diversion from the main stream of the national struggle, the Communists saw a new class coming to the forefront, a class on whose political maturity depend the outcome of national struggle itself.

6. The steadily growing strength of the trade unions in India, despite heavy repression and intimidation, despite the misery through which the workers have waded before even a semblance of organization could be created, works the beginning of a new era in post-war India. In 1918 no organized trade unions existed. Within a decade there were 29 registered trade unions with a membership of 100,619. In 1935-36 there were 236 unions, with a membership of 268,326. Within a decade the membership was more than doubled, and this in spite of the fact that the decade witnessed the biggest offensive directed against working class organizations. Trade union income increased from Rs 163,581 in 1927-28 to Rs 587,692 in 1935-36 an increase of nearly 350 per cent and this at a time when to be a member of the union was to invite victimization. The number of unions increased from 29 in 1927-28 to 236 in 1935-36.

Though the number of organized workers (268,326) appears very small in relation to the total number (18,000,000) employed in some branch of industry or another, or even in relation to those (5,000,000) engaged in organized and regulated industries, yet it would be a mistake to deduce the actual influence and strength from the paying membership alone. Trade unions possess a far greater influence and are always at the head of the innumerable strike struggles that take place. In 1936 alone not less than 600,000 workers struck work, and the overwhelming majority carried on their struggles under the leadership of their unions.

7. The increasing membership and influence, in different industries, the establishment of a united central organ the TUC, the gradual replacing of the local conflicts by nation-wide conflicts (Textile strike of 1934)—all these be taken that the working class is gradually becoming more and more unified in the day-to-day struggles and developing a co-ordinated and unified leadership. Thus the pre-condition laid down by Marx for the political unification of the working class namely 'that a previous organization of the working class itself arising itself from the economic struggles should have been developed up to a certain point' is being rapidly fulfilled.

8. Side by side with this a growing number of organized workers participate in political activities and demonstration, launch protest strike against repression, and take an active part in the programme and activities of the national organization. The main achievement of the last two decades may, therefore, be summarized as follows: The trade union struggle has increased in its scope, the trade unions have become a force claiming the allegiance of thousands; every year increasing number of workers are realizing the necessity of a permanent organization to defend their own interest; the workers everywhere have overcome the resistance of the reformist leadership to direct action; the present day organizations are mostly born in the process of strike struggles. 'Pure trade Unionism' or 'economism' which at one time split the TU movement (in 1929) is no longer able to stay the march of the workers towards unification and politicalization—freedom of political propaganda is allowed inside the TUC. Individual unions and their members freely participate in political activities without a danger of split in the TU ranks. Directly through the trade union struggle, as well as through free participation, the political consciousness of the workers has risen and is daily rising.

9. With all this, the trade union movement has yet to achieve its basic task—the task of winning the entire class in the struggle for partial demands. Real class unity can be achieved only if the central organ of the TU movement plays the role of a guide, leader and unifier. The united Trade Union Congress, however, keeps to the old traditions and plays the role of a passive spectator, of gigantic struggles. It does not study the industrial situation and refuses to forewarn the workers. It has no plan for offering guidance to local unions. It makes no effort to co-ordinate the scattered struggles or make special efforts to organize the unorganized. Its unions are left to their own fate when engaged in struggles. Its existence is never felt by the workers in their hour of need. Its decisions are not known to the workers. They remain the special treasure of union officials. The TUC which must appear to every worker, as the embodiment of class unity, as the embodiment of the fighting resources of the entire proletariat, is today only a platform. It does not serve as a leader and coordinator of struggles.

The result has been that the worker looks only to his local union, and his trade union consciousness does not go beyond his immediate industrial surroundings. He remains apathetic to struggles of workers in the same industry at other places. The efficacy of nation-wide economic struggle, of working class unity, is not demonstrated to him. Class unity cannot be achieved under these conditions.

The first step towards class unity, therefore lies in activizing the TUC into a genuine leader of the working class in its partial struggles. The TUC must seriously study problems of different industries, and be able to give its guidance to the workers. It must appeal to the workers in its own name and not only through the local unions. It should seize initiative on matters affecting the entire working class and carry on a vigorous agitation in its own name. Whenever necessary it must prepare for widespread industrial action under its leadership. It is only through such co-ordinating activities on the part of the central organ, that genuine class unity can be achieved. The revolutionaries inside the TUC must see that the central organ discharges its responsibility in this direction.

The revolutionaries inside the TUC must be the first to carry out the mandates of the TUC and popularize them among the workers. They should be foremost in observing TUC discipline in matters which are primarily the concerns of the TU movement. Undermining TU discipline under any excuse is nothing short of disruption and amounts to throwing up barriers against class unity. Side by side with this the struggle for the unification of rival union must be carried on with greater vigour. The unity at the centre is yet to be followed by amalgamation of rival unions. This useless division in the ranks of the workers has to be ended once for all. Once more the central organ has failed to give a lead on this question. The Left must persistently demand such unification as the logical conclusion of the unity registered at Nagpur. It must be realized that the unity achieved at Nagpur is only the beginning and not the end.

10. The spontaneous urge of the masses towards organization, the heroism with which they defend the unions, requires that individual unions should employ every avenue for giving relief to the workers. The movement has gone beyond the agitational stage; trade unions have become more than leaders of spontaneous strikes. They are rapidly becoming an integral part of working class life. Even though the removal of individual grievances is rendered difficult because of non-recognition of unions, still there exists a wide field open to the unions. The Acts of the central and local Govt have never been utilized to the full by trade unions. Special agencies have developed in Bombay to secure compensation to the workers under the Workers' Compensation Act. The initiative thus passes out of the hands of the unions and the workers are defrauded. A close study of these Acts, the possibility of relief under these, education of the workers in connection with them; agitation for amending them, all these must be utilized by individual unions if they are to retain the loyalty of an ever-growing number.

11. Side by side with a vigorous defence of the economic demands, the TUC, individual unions and revolutionaries must put a stiff resistance to the growing attacks against the freedom of Trade Union movement. Since 1929, the Government of India, followed by local Governments is making strenuous efforts to attack the right of strike and organization. Misguided legislation by some Congress Ministries is leading to the same result. Measures like the Bombay Trade Disputes Act, which endanger the freedom of the TU movement, must be combated with the full strength and the resources of working class. It is impermissible for any Socialist or Communist to either support or take a neutral attitude on such measures. It is just because they not only disrupt the ranks of the working class, but disrupt national unity, that they have to be combated most ruthlessly. The class unity of the working class can be achieved in the measure that the democratic rights of the working class are kept unimpaired and a united struggle against their curtailment launched.

12. Defending the economic interests of the working class, struggling for TU and class unity, the revolutionaries should be able to bring larger and larger sections face to face with their political responsibilities. The main task that faces the proletariat today is that of national unification under the banner of the Congress. The working class as a class does not today strive for this task consciously and effectively. Neglect of the Trade Union struggle by national leaders, the prejudices which hitherto existed against it among the bulk of Congressmen, its consequent development as an exclusive struggle, coupled with the old traditions of 'economism', have been responsible for a certain estrangement and apathy towards the Congress. In spite of a number of gigantic struggles, fought with heroism and suffering, the bulk of the workers remain strangers to the national organization and to the specific political task facing them in connection with it. The fact that the backward sections of workers still continue to be swayed by anti-Congress Communal leaders (Muslim League, Ambedkar in Bombay) and the fact that a section of the TU leadership itself is hostile to the national organization, complicate the problem still further.

It is under these difficult circumstances that the task of drawing the workers into the Indian National Congress has to be carried forward. The estrangement and the apathy of the workers has to be overcome; the consciousness that the National Congress is the organ of national unification, that it is their task to make it more effective has to be created.

13. This task has to be achieved without splitting Trade Union unity, without turning the backward workers away from the union. Trade union unity and mass mobilization under individual unions form the very basis of the task. Any attempt, therefore, to impose high-sounding resolutions by means of a majority vote (Socialist resolution at Cawnpore) asking the reformist leadership to accept the political line of the revolutionary wing is nothing short of disruption.

14. This task of bringing the Congress and Trade Unions nearer to each other and forging unity between them demands on the one hand greater participation of the Working Class masses in Congress activities and greater identification of the Congress with Working Class struggles on the other. By joining the Congress in their thousands by participating in all political meetings and demonstrations organized by the Congress, the working class shall be able to increasingly influence the Congress and strengthen those forces inside it that stand for the policy of unity and struggle, for support by the Congress to the struggles of workers.

At the same time efforts must be made to move the Congress towards the working class, to make the Congress organizations take such stand as will enable it to increase its influence over the entire working class including even its backward sections.

The latter is active in strike struggles, when issues affecting the class or section as a whole are involved. Association of Congress Committees with these struggles, when the former can appear before the entire mass, strenuous efforts to secure this in spite of the Rightist vacillations, will be the most concrete demonstration of the Congress being the fighting organ of the people's will. The ties developed during struggle are far more binding than others. For this the old tradition of conducting workers' struggle in isolation must be ended. Every struggle must appeal to the people's conscience, must secure the co-operation and support of Congress Committees. The working class must experience the efficacy of popular unification in its day-to-day struggles. The successes scored at Cawnpore, Dhulia, Chalisgaon, demonstrate how Trade Union struggle can be developed into a popular struggle.

Basing themselves on the close association of the Congress and the people with working class struggles, the revolutionaries will be able to give the required political perspective to the entire mass of the workers.

15. To carry out this task successfully, the revolutionary leadership should be able to appeal effectively to the people, the Congressmen; this means that the appeal from the TU platform must be replaced by an appeal to the democratic conscience and aspirations of the non-working class sections. The criticism of reactionary ministerial actions must be turned to the consciousness of the public, even strike strategy and tactics will have to be decided with a view to win public sympathy and Congress support. In short in conducting struggles and the Trade Union movement in general, the revolutionaries must never forget that they are a part of the people's struggle and their success depends not only in working class unity, but on the united resistance of the entire population.

16. Developing the trade union struggle as a part of the people's struggle, the revolutionary leadership will be able to make it more effective and thereby overcome the resistance of TU sections. Its success will bring even the most backward workers under the TU banner and pave the way for complete class unity. The main demands of the working class such as minimum living wage, and right of Trade Union organization etc., will for the first time be considered as part of the people's demands and the working class will secure strong sanctions to enforce them. The close

association of Congressmen, and Congress organizations with working-class struggles, will break the old walls of isolation. The TU movement will be recognized as a limb of the national movement and working class as its powerful arm. The working class will begin to recognize the Congress as the organization of People's unity. Having seen the effectiveness of unity in the day-to-day struggles, the working class will fight for it all the more on the political plane inside the National Congress. It will get ready to shoulder its responsibilities and undertake the task of national unification on a higher plane.

17. To develop the TUC into an active leader of the partial struggles, to wage a vigorous fight for immediate demands, and to develop every struggle in close co-operation with the Congress, without splitting Trade Union unity these today form the basic tasks before the revolutionaries. They will achieve the political unification of the working class, enabling it to fulfil its decisive role, only to the extent they succeed in achieving the above tasks.

21. An All-India Worker's Party

Article by A.K. Gopalan, *New Age*, Vol. 5, No. 12, May 1939.

May 1939

The need for an open all-India Working Class Party has been advocated from time to time by a number of comrades. They maintain that without such a Party the working class cannot fulfil its historic role of leadership of the national liberation movement.

The comrades argue: 'The mass organizations that we have today are sectional organizations—Trade Unions, concerning themselves with day-to-day grievances of workers, leading battles for economic betterment of the workers. Through such organizations, workers cannot be trained, mobilized and organized politically, they cannot act as a political force. And since the Communist Party is illegal and since the Congress Socialist Party would not transform itself into a mass proletarian party, refusal to form an open Working Class Party on a national scale means repudiation of the leading role of the working class. Consistent with their declared policy, the Communists can be no party to this repudiation. Therefore, it is their task to come forward and launch the All India Working Class Party. Starting with the existing Communist cadres: of both proletarian and non-proletarian organs as its nucleus, the Party would (1) rapidly attract all genuine Socialist elements in the Congress, who are getting disgusted with the weak-kneed and vacillating policy of the Congress Socialist Party, (2) make a special drive in the working class, draw in the most militant and politically conscious sections of workers, (3) extend its base in the rural areas, making special efforts to enrol the most active Kisan Sabha workers and thus develop as the Central Political Organization of the working class. Such a party alone would place the proletariat on the political map of the country, would enable it to play its proper role in the national movement.'

Comrades who advocate this line may or may not admit it but the fact is that they want the repudiation of the line of Socialist unity which we have been pursuing hitherto and the setting up of an all-India organization separate from, and parallel to, the CSP. That is the most important implication of their line.

But that is not all. What lies at the root of the demand for an all-India Working Class Party is the inability to understand the role, function and the present task of the Communists.

The Working Class movement in India has made tremendous headway during the last two years. In 1937 alone 676,000 workers participated in the strikes and the number of days lost reached the staggering figure of nine millions. These numbers surpass any in the previous years. There are today 296 Trade Unions with a total membership of 2,61,000. Fighting mostly under the

leadership of these Trade Unions, whose mobilizing power as a whole has grown faster than their actual membership, the working class masses have displayed the most remarkable heroism, initiative, solidarity, discipline and resisting power. But these struggles have been overwhelmingly of an economic character. Barring the great strike of the Bombay workers against the Labour Bill and the Sholapur Strike in protest against the non-release of political prisoners, almost all the other strikes of 1937 and 1938 have been revolts against wretched conditions of work and miserably low wages. They do indicate a great step forward, and the way and the workers fought them show far greater consciousness and awakening than at any period before, they set large masses of backward and unorganized workers in motion and created in them consciousness of their rights. But mass action by the proletariat of definitely political character, actions against measures which do not constitute an attack on the working class as such but on the nation as a whole or non-proletarian masses, have been extremely rare.

The year 1938 saw unprecedented growth of the States Peoples' movement. With ruthless terror by direct Imperialist intervention it was sought to be crushed. Travancore, Kashmir, Dhenkanal, Rajkot, witnessed great awakening of the people on one hand and brutal repression on the other. Yet not in one industrial centre in the whole country were even big solidarity demonstrations by the proletariat organized—not to speak of mass protest strikes.

It can be stated without fear of contradiction that till we have developed the elemental discontent of the proletariat with its economic conditions into real political consciousnesses that the proletariat reacts to every expression of imperialist oppression—no matter which class or section is involved, till the proletariat acts politically as the vanguard of the national liberation movement, as the active supporter of every struggle of every section of the Indian people, it shall fail to influence the National movement as a whole. One of the most important tasks before the Communist is to create this consciousness.

What the fulfilment of this task requires is intensive political campaign in the working class as a whole, organization of political action by the proletariat and the political training of the best cadres of workers. It is surprising, however, that those who most lament the political backwardness of the working class and who are the most vocal advocates of 'open workers party' seldom make any effort to carry on political agitation in the working class. They rarely hold meetings in the working class to explain the crisis in the Congress or the development of the States Peoples movement and its significance for the national liberation struggle. Even in times of great industrial actions by the proletariat e.g. the Bengal Jute Strike of 1937 when over 2,00,000 workers had been set in motion and at the time of the Assembly Elections of 1936, they did nothing to develop political consciousness among the workers. The justification given for not utilizing such unique opportunities is that the 'workers will not understand political slogans'.

The tasks which we have outlined above—political campaign in the working class, political training of proletarian cadres—organizations of political actions by the working class—do not require an open workers' Party. Through the existing proletarian and Congress organisations, through United Front platform between the CSP and Trade Unions, through political schools, it is possible to achieve all these tasks. Nothing prevents us from going before the working class as Congressmen, as Communists and from the existing platforms and through them popularize our general democratic as well as specifically proletarian slogans. Nothing prevents us from organizing political actions by the working class. Nothing prevents us from politically training the most advanced elements from the workers.

In order that the proletariat may play its rightful role in the national movement, what is needed is a better functioning and utilization of the existing organizations and platforms—Trade Unions, Congress locals and Socialist Parties. Through this we shall be able to draw ever-increasing sections

of workers into struggle, create in them Trade Union consciousness, develop political consciousness, train cadres, organize mass political actions and thus influence and mould the national movement. Setting up a new Party or platform is not the way.

It is not however with the object of developing political consciousness in the working class and organizing mass political actions by the proletariat that the formation of All-India working class party is primarily advocated. That would be obvious to anyone who cares to examine the arguments advanced. The most important of them is: 'The Congress Socialist Party is becoming more and more reactionary. Communists who have joined it are being thrown out and even those that remain in it are unable to influence it. Therefore it is necessary for the Communists and their supporters to form a Party of their own—a party through which the Communist line may be put forth in its entirety, and uncompromisingly.'

Let us examine this argument in relation to the tasks facing the Communists. One of the tasks before us, as we have already stated, is the politicization of the working class movement. But we have to fulfil other tasks too. The national liberation movement in India, as in other colonial countries, occupies a dominant place in national politics. This movement has already reached a high level, has already drawn into its orbit millions of our countrymen. The national Congress is the organized expression and leader of this movement. Under the impact of the world Socialist movement, as a result of the world crisis of capitalism and the victory of socialism in the USSR, as a result of the failure of Gandhism, increasingly larger sections in the national Congress are inevitably turning towards socialism. With all its limitations and shortcomings, the CSP is the expression of this trend. Its vacillations, its lack of homogeneity, its ultra-leftism on certain occasions (advocacy of Socialist platform for the Congress) and virtual surrender to Gandhism on others ('there is no difference between the Right and the Left today... our differences with Gandhiji would come after national independence is achieved'), its failure to carry out a consistent line—all these reflect the present stage and level of our socialist movement as a whole. Along with the politicization of the working class movement—one of the tasks of Communists is to raise this level, to give clarity and purposive direction to the existing Socialist movement, to unite the existing socialist forces in the country and develop them as the driving force of the national movement. To sneer at the CSP and its shortcomings is to sneer at the existing Socialist movement, to sneer at ourselves, who are a part of it.

Will this task—the unification of the existing Socialist forces, and the raising of the level and strengthening of the socialist movement as a whole—be facilitated by our forming another Socialist Workers' Party? Will the socialist movement be able to exercise greater influence on the national movement than it does today, if we form such a Party? Will the Socialist orientation of the Congress rank and file be accelerated by this step?

These are the questions that must be answered.

The argument that the Communists are not being admitted in the CSP and are even being thrown out of it and therefore we need another party is not a serious political argument by itself. Undoubtedly that is a difficulty in our way of influencing the CSP to the extent to which we would like. But the question, whether this difficulty should be overcome by more persistent efforts to broaden the CSP or whether we should form another party can and must be determined primarily by considerations of the tasks before the Socialist movement in our country.

One of the arguments is that the CSP is going to the Right and therefore another Party is needed to check this drift. It is childish to argue that this new Party shall act as a corrective to the CSP, and shall by giving consistent anti-Imperialist slogans and standing firmly by them prevent the CSP from 'wobbling and vacillating' and 'going to the Right'. Those who argue in this way forget the basic fact that what appears as the vacillation of the CSP is due basically not to personal

shortcomings but to the present stage and strength of the Socialist movement as a whole. M.R. Masani¹ and A. Patwardhan² have come to occupy certain positions in the Congress because they represent, however vaguely and in a distorted manner, certain tendencies. And the fact that in spite of his attacks on the Soviet Union, in spite of his anti-unity activities, Masani continues to be a leader of the CSP and is looked upon as such, is due to the present stage and level of the Socialist movement. What is needed is the raising of this level of the movement and that can be done by patient and systematic ideological clarification, by explaining our slogans, not by forming another Party. On the contrary, the formation of another Party is the surest way of arresting the growth of Socialist consciousness in the CSP and driving the CSP to the right.

By forming another Party, i.e., creating a parallel all-India centre of the Socialist movement, we shall be perpetuating the division in Socialist ranks and thus weakening the Socialist movement as a whole. The inevitable tendency in our ranks would be to exploit and capitalize every mistake of the CSP in order to break away elements from it. The efforts of the CSP would be in the same direction. Slogans would be given (if we keep in mind the present maturity of our cadres) not keeping in view the needs of the situation but in order to score points and appear 'more left' on the one hand and 'more Congress-minded' on the other. The result would be fettering away of our energy in mutual recriminations instead of joint efforts, to strengthen the Socialist movement as a whole and influence the national movement through it. This conflict would be utilized by disruptive elements in the Congress—both from the Right and the Left. The radicalized Congressmen who are orientating towards Socialism would turn away, when they find Socialists unable to agree amongst themselves.

In brief by the formation of another party we shall be attempting to 'take a disastrous short-cut towards our objective—the development of a broad-based mass Socialist movement—a short-cut which will not enable us to reach our objective, but will lead to the splitting of the existing Socialist movement and weakening it. Not one argument advanced in favour of this course can stand closer examination, if we keep in view the tasks facing the Socialists and Communists today in the working class and the national movement, if we do not forget that the existing shortcomings of the CSP are due to the present stage and level of the Socialist and Working class movements as a whole.

¹ M.R. Masani (1905–98); founder-member, Congress Socialist Party, and its Joint Secretary, 1934–39; Mayor of Bombay, 1943–44; member, Indian Legislative Assembly, 1945–47, and Constituent Assembly, 1946–48, and 1949–50; Ambassador of India in Brazil, 1948–49; member, Provisional parliament, 1950–52, and Lok Sabha, 1957–70; General Secretary, Swatantra Party, 1960–67, and its President, 1970–71; publications included: *Our India*, *Socialism Reconsidered*, *The Communist Party of India: A Short History*, *The Constitution: Twenty Five Years Later*, *Bliss was it in that Dawn...*, *Against the Tide*, and Co-author with C.Y. Chintamani, *India's Constitution at Work*.

² Achyut Patwardhan (1905–92); educated at Ahmadnagar and Banaras; Professor, Central Hindu College, Banaras Hindu University (till 1932); participated in Civil Disobedience movement (1932); member, Congress Working Committee (1936); organized 'Shibirs' (education camps) (1935–41) to teach Socialism; participated in Individual Satyagraha and was in imprisonment from October 1940 to April 1942, and there he wrote *Communal Triangle in India*, in collaboration with Asoka Mehta; participated in Quit India Movement, was in underground (1942–46) and led the underground movement, and directed the formation of Prati Sarkar (parallel government) especially in Satara and was known 'Sataryacha Sinha' (The Lion of Satara); was editor of *Janta*; gave up politics (1950) and again resumed professorship in Central Hindu College, BHU, and remained there (till 1966); in later years was associated with Krishnamurti and his movement.



22. Hazaribagh People's Demand

Searchlight, 13 May 1939.

Hazaribagh
12 May 1939

A representative public meeting of the citizens of Hazaribagh was held yesterday evening, in the premises of the local Keshev Hall, Babu Ram Narayan Singh,¹ MLA (Central) presided.

The question of the site for the next session of the Congress was considered. After prolonged deliberations the following resolution was passed unanimously:

This public meeting of the citizens of Hazaribagh records its strong protest against the attitude of the Provincial Working Committee in ignoring the recommendation of Mr Gulati about Barkakana as the site for the next Congress, and urges upon the Provincial Congress Committee and Dr Rajendra Prasad the desirability of holding the next session of the Indian National Congress at some place in Chotanagpur, preferably at Barkakana on the following other grounds:

1. Mr Gulati has suggested this to be the best site for an ideal Village Congress.
2. That the aboriginal and poverty-stricken people of Chotanagpur will be very much benefited.
3. That the requirements of milk and water can be easily met.
4. That the political consciousness of the people will be much awakened and all agitation regarding the separation of Chotanagpur will be put an end to.
5. That Barkakana is a centrally situated place.
6. That the raw materials required for construction purposes will be available almost at the site at cheap rate.
7. That Barkakana is practically at the centre of the newly selected prohibition area in the districts of Hazaribagh and Ranchi and
8. That Barkakana is situated in the midst of an industrial and labour area and is very close to Jamshedpur, the biggest industrial town of Bihar.'

¹Babu Ram Narayan Singh came into prominence at the Bihari Students' Conference at Hazaribagh in 1921 where he supported the boycott of Government schools and colleges, and advocated prohibition. For opposing the Prince of Wales's visit, he was put into Hazaribagh jail in 1921. In 1924 Singh attended the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee meeting, as well as the Khilafat Conference, in Purnea. Thereafter he participated in the Santal reform movement at Gunia and was jailed for one year. In 1936 he attended the 19th Session of Bihar Political Conference in Patna, and made a special appeal for taking into consideration the question of 'excluded' areas in the new constitution. In 1937 Singh participated in the 'National Week' celebration by the Gaya District Political Conference at Warsaliganj, where he became a party to the passing of a resolution recommending the abolition of Zamindari.

23. Resolutions of Textile Workers of Bombay Held under Girni Kamgar Union, Bombay, 14 May 1939

AITUC Papers, File No. 61, Part I, 1938-39, NMML.

Dear Comrade,

Herewith I am sending you a copy of the resolution adopted at the workers' meeting called by the Girni Kamgar Union (Red Flag) on the 14th inst. The resolution gives you the direction to carry on the agitation amongst the Textile workers of your place.

It is also proposed to call a conference of representatives of the Textile workers in Bombay to consider the Textile crisis which is very rapidly developing. This conference will decide the plan

of motion against the offensive of the Mill owners all over India. The tentative day of the conference will be the 28th inst.

I shall therefore request you to hold yourself in readiness for the forthcoming conference. You should prepare for it with the local report on the situation obtaining at your place. Your representatives must attend the conference when called and this is to caution you beforehand.

With greetings.

Yours fraternally,
General Secretary.

Resolution

This meeting of the Textile workers of Bombay held under the auspices of the Girni Kamgar Union, Bombay (Red Flag) draws the attention of the Ministry and the public to the alarming condition in the Textile Industry. While ministerial legislations on Minimum Living Wage and Unemployment Benefit still lies in the womb of the future, the closing of night shifts in Bombay, followed by lock-outs in mills has thrown nearly 1500 workers to the streets, without any provision for their livelihood.

Evidence has not been wanting to show that the closing of night shifts, and the increase in lock-outs form a part of general offensive of the owners to wrest from the workers the gains of wage increase granted by the Congress Ministry. The owners never accepted the wage increase with good grace and had started pleading against it since the day it came into operation.

This meeting is of opinion that neither the additional taxation levied by the provincial Govt nor the present trade condition warrant any attack on the workers' standard of living. The meeting condemns the Indo-British trade agreement and the duty on raw cotton, imposed by the Govt of India, and at the same time opines that even these do not justify a wide spread attack on the existing level of wages.

In the opinion of the meeting the closing of night shifts and lock-outs in the mills constitutes the beginning of a new offensive to further rationalization and bring down the wages. The meeting further declares emphatically that this offensive is started with a view to regain the extra profits the industry was making, and to which the Inquiry Committee had drawn attention.

The looming offensive further seeks to forestall certain ameliorative measures which all Congress Ministries are bound to undertake by virtue of their declared programme, e.g. Minimum wage, Unemployment Benefit and Leave with full pay.

The meeting is of opinion that a major conflict between the Textiles workers and the owners will be unavoidable if the attitude of the owners continues to be what it is today and if the ministry of the province failed to intervene and protect the gains that it itself has given to the workers.

The meeting therefore requests the owners to stop all further offensive in the shape of lock-outs and immediately discuss the situation with the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union. The meeting asks the ministry to immediately intervene stopping further deterioration and summon a conference of the representatives of capital and labour.

The meeting asks the workers to close up their ranks and immediately set afoot preparations for a widespread general strike which may have to resorted to if the owners remain obdurate and the Ministry fails to protect employment and wages from being attacked.

The meeting decides to start immediately a mobilizing fund and hold weekly rallies for organizing the workers.

The meeting appeals to the public and to all Congress organizations and individual Congressmen to bring ministerial and public pressure on the Textile owners who threaten to wipe out the wage increase given by the Congress ministry and render further progress impossible. It is

the firm conviction of this meeting that the combined pressure of Workers, Organizations and the Public will be strong enough to resist the new offensive which threatens to create unemployment and starvation for thousands and challenges the very implementing of the Congress Manifesto.

Considering the fact that the offensive is planned on an All-India scale the meeting suggests that an immediate conference of delegates from Textile centres be called to adopt a plan of action on All-India Platform.

24. Labour Situation in Bombay: Roger Lumley to Linlithgow, Fortnightly Report for the First Half of May, 15 May 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2194, NAI.

...Labour situation: There has been another stay-in strike in a mill. Munshi authorized the police to use tear-gas if strike collapsed on the intervention of Gulzari Lal Nanda, the Parliamentary Secretary for Labour. Munshi has now issued a press note warning workers that a stay-in strike is a criminal offence and a civil wrong and that they may be running themselves into difficulties if they use this weapon.

This strike, however, is a symptom of renewed uneasiness in the industrial position. The mills are doing badly and are reported to be losing money, and as result they are beginning to close down night shifts and to turn off labour. The mill owners have made one attempt to get out of the wage increase of 12½ per cent which was made as a result of the interim report of the Textile Enquiry Committee. Neither the Government nor the Committee are prepared to meet them on this matter. The mill-owners, I understand, are seeking to obtain agreement amongst all mills throughout India to work only 5 days a week. This, it seems to me would be a better course than a reduction in wages or cutting down of staff but it is not yet certain whether agreement will be reached. We have had a considerable period of quiet in the labour world in Bombay, but it is now possible that the present bad trading condition may lead to further labour trouble. At the moment, however, the Communists are adopting the role of orthodox trade unionists and are endeavouring to appear as cooperators with the Congress, somewhat to the embarrassment of the right wing. There are two events ahead which will cause some anxiety. The Industrial Disputes Act will come into operation within the next three months and there has been some vague talk of a general strike to protest against it. Dr Ambedkar's people, however, have been for some time at loggerheads with the Communists, and there is not at present much prospect of a united front in the opposition against the Act. In October the final report of the Textile Enquiry Committee is likely to appear. It seems possible that it may lay down a theoretical living wage which will be well above the capacity of the industry to pay. Such a standard, sponsored by a responsible Committee would provide the Communists with food for agitation for many years to come. Munshi and I know the Chairman of the Committee are alive to this danger, and it will, I hope, be avoided.

In the meanwhile, the Ministry is pushing on well with the formation of welfare centres in the mill area. The Gandhi Seva Sangh is also working away quietly amongst the workers, and there now appears to be quite a favourable prospect that a Congress Trade Union on the lines of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association will be established. I look upon this development, if it materializes with satisfaction, but there may well be a struggle between the Communists and the new Congress development before the latter becomes established....



25. Congress and Businessmen

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 20 May 1939.

20 May 1939

On the occasion of the opening of its own new building on Friday, the Indian Merchants' Chamber received felicitations from Gandhiji, the Ministers of the Bombay Government and other prominent leaders of the Congress. These felicitations are deserved tributes to the splendid service rendered by the Chamber to the country in promoting its economic interests and also to its loyal co-operation with the Congress on various occasions. In declaring the building open Sardar Vallabhbhai cordially acknowledged the Chamber's assistance to the Congress and pointed out that this was but natural as the objective of both the institutions was practically identical. Unless the country becomes completely free it is impossible for the Congress or the Chamber to promote their common interests. This has once again been demonstrated by the imposition on India of the Indo-British Trade Agreement, to which apt reference was made by Mr Bhulabhai Desai in unveiling the bust of the late Mr Lalji Naranji. It, therefore, behoves both the Congress and Indian businessmen to concentrate now their best efforts on the attainment of political freedom. We cannot imagine any self-respecting Indian businessmen to say: 'Let the Congress fight for and win freedom, we will then step in and claim our share of its fruits.'

That the Indian Merchants' Chamber will continue to co-operate with the Congress to some extent goes without saying. But we would like to emphasize the point that in the years to come that co-operation needs to be considerable and wholehearted, though, as the Sardar assured the Chamber, that should not prevent it from criticizing Congress policy. The next and last stage of the struggle for freedom is bound to be most strenuous and by accepting office in eight provinces Congress has undertaken enormous responsibilities. One of its hardest tasks is to safeguard evenly the apparently conflicting interest of Labour and Capital, of manufactures and agriculture of small and large industries. But the very composition of the Indian Merchants' Chamber is such that it represents some economic sections more than others. Yet there are many businessmen in it who take broad, far-reaching, national views. Moreover, in the last analysis, a sound national policy best serves the interests which the Chamber particularly represents. That is why we often state that by supporting the national policy of the Congress, the Chamber will help both itself and the country.

The point deserves to be considered in some detail. The Congress has to give some special attention to workers and peasants as they are poor, ignorant and unorganized. It has also to give special protection to village industries as they are indispensable for the poor unemployed or underemployed agriculturists who cannot organize such industries without support from bodies like the Congress. When, therefore, Congress and Congress Government adopt measures to give special protection to these weak interests, it behoves bodies like the Indian Merchants' Chamber to support such measures in the interests of the country as a whole, even if it means some diminution in the profits of the large scale manufacturers. After all, as the Sardar put it, it is not the few rich in the cities that constitute true India, but the poor millions in the villages. Then again, protection in one form or other to the poor millions must mean some cost to the Government but the cost cannot possibly be recovered from the poor people themselves. It must be recovered largely from taxes on the comparatively richer people. The Indian Merchants' Chamber should wholeheartedly support such a fair policy of taxation. In its essence that policy means the transference of some strength from the stronger links of a chain to the weaker ones. All enlightened businessmen should boldly support such a policy as it adds to the strength of the whole chain, which is that of its weakest links.

26. The Digboi Strike: From the President, Mymensingh District Congress Committee to the Secretary, All India Congress Committee
AICC Papers, File No. G-39, 1939. (A similar resolution was adopted by the Bengal Trade Union Congress on 3 July 1939), NMML.

Mymensingh
24 May 1939

Sir,

In a public meeting held at Mymensingh on 23rd May, with Mr Madhusudhan Banerjee in the Chair, the following resolutions were adopted.

1. This meeting records the sympathy and support for the strikers at the Digboi Oil Mine and thinks the cause of the strikers legal and just.
2. This meeting strongly condemns the firing on the peaceful strikers of the Digboi Oil Mine and records its heartiest sympathy for those who fell martyr to the cause.
3. This meeting expresses its strong resentment and condemnation at the action of the Mine-owners who rejected the offer of the Assam Government to mediate.
4. This meeting requests the Congress Working Committee to take up the cause of the Digboi Oil Mine strikers and requests the Indians to boycott the BOC Oil.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant
Surendra Mohan Ghose
President

27. Jubbulpore Workers' Ultimatum

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 26 May 1939.

25 May 1939

At a meeting of the Workers, Union of the Perfect Pottery Works of Jubbulpore, it was resolved to resort to general strike if their demands were not acceded to by the 29th May. Notice of this intended strike has also been given to the management yesterday. Recognition of the Workers' Union and an increase in wages are the primary demands of the workers. The management, however, are against recognizing the Union, as the Works Manager had pointed out, a very small proportion of the workers form the Union. Moreover, they are not inclined to be dictated by outsiders.

Similarly the Jubbulpore Municipal Workers' Union have also notified the President of the Municipality of their intention to go on strike if their ultimatum, which expires on June 22, is unsuccessful. The strikers will include the whole of the Municipal menial establishment and the sweepers.

Nearly 1000 workers of the Kymore Asbestos Cement Works have gone on strike during the week-end. Peaceful picketing has been resorted to and yesterday a batch of armed police was despatched in case of untoward happenings. They are still camping at the spot. It may be recalled here that six months ago a one-day strike occurred at the works when a compromise was arrived at through the intervention of Messrs V.R. Kallppa, MLA and Hanmant Rao, MLA the management

agreeing to redress certain grievances. As those grievances were not even partially redressed, ... an ultimatum has been given.

28. Unrest in Assam Tea Gardens

Hindustan Times, 27 May 1939.

Shillong
26 May 1939

Announcing the formation of the Tea Gardens Labour Enquiry Committee, the Government of Assam, in a Gazette Notification says:

The Government of Assam, have observed with much anxiety the frequency of strikes and disturbances on the tea gardens in several parts of the province during recent years. It has been represented to them that the causes of these strikes and disturbances have of late not been traceable in any real economic grievances, but in extraneous influences and political ferment.

It appears to the Government, however, unsafe to proceed in forming their policy with regard to the welfare of labour on the tea gardens on the assumption that there are no legitimate economic grievances; and in their opinion it is highly desirable to obtain and shift all possible information on the whole subject. For this purpose, they have decided to appoint a committee of enquiry constituted as follows: Mr S.K. Ghosh, ICS, Controller of Emigrant Labour, Chairman; Mr F.W. Hockenhull, MLA (on behalf of the Indian Tea Association), Mr Baidyanath Mukherjee (on behalf of the employees of estates in Indian ownership); Mr A.K. Chanda, MLA, and Mr Debeswar Sarma, MLA. The committee will visit such estates as they consider necessary and will frame their own programme.

The terms of reference of the committee were:

1. To determine what is the root cause of the recent strikes and other manifestations of discontent on tea gardens in Assam; and particularly whether they are economic grievances, whether generally in the districts concerned or in the affected estates;
2. What measures are required in order to remove the root cause or cause of the said strikes?
3. Whether and if what form of organization is desirable for enabling labourers on tea gardens to communicate their grievances to the management in such effective manner as will remove any doubt that their interests are secure, and to procure settlement of such grievances, if any, by negotiation.

During the period of the enquiry and pending submission and consideration of the committee's report the Government trust that no action will be taken by either the employers or the labourers or other persons interested in the welfare of labour which might hamper the work of the committee, or disturb the atmosphere required for promoting good relations between the employers and the employed. It is their intention to discourage and disapprove any strikes, lock-outs or other activities which might prejudice the results of the committee's efforts. If necessary, they will be prepared to see that this mutual forbearance is enforced by the use of the powers given by law, or to consider other measures, should the existing law prove inadequate for the prevention of any action initiated in contravention thereof. For this purpose, the Government are already in correspondence with the parties to the present disputes and trust that their plea for the creation of a peaceful atmosphere for the committee will be generously met.



29. Struggle of Labourers

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 3 June 1939.

1 June 1939

Addressing a public meeting last evening at Patna City, held to consider the situation arising out of Bihariji Mills strike, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati said: 'On one side are the labourers fighting for their bread, on the other are the "johukums" of the Government, the Rai Bahadurs the potbellied who feed fat on the poor,' thus began Swami Sahajanand Saraswati presiding over the largely attended meeting of the Bihariji Mills strikers held today at Mangal Talab, Patna City.

Continuing, he said that it was a question of honour with the labourers, it was a question of life and death for them. The Award given by the Arbitration Committee over the dispute between them and the mill-owners did not meet their demands. It did not clarify the position of the female workers, nor was it signed by all the members of the committee; and, as such, the labourers were perfectly justified in rejecting that, they wanted security of service, permanency of service for all of them and no decision therefore that did not contain that clause they were going to accept. It was their firm resolution and they must maintain to the last.

They must not be cowed down by the might of their enemies backed as it was by the force of the British Government. They must fight for their rights and fight till they won their point. They should carry on their strike with added zeal and vigour and they must know that victory would be theirs if the Secretary of Workers' Union, has been dismissed, the Union decided to declare strike after a week's notice.

Among other things the workers demand the re-instatement of the Secretary, the recognition of the Union, provision for quarters and good sanitary arrangement for the workers, and either a full week's work for the workers or an increase in wages.

30. 15,000 Labourers on Strike

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 7 June 1939.

There has been a strike in three jute mills, one in Telinipara and two in Bhadreswar in the Serampore Sub-division in the district of Hooghly. The mills affected are the Victoria Jute Mills, North Shamnugger Jute Mill and the Angus Jute Mill, and the number of operatives idle in these three mills is about 15,000.

The men of North Shamnugger Jute Mill were the first to go out. They were followed by men of Angus Jute Mill and later by those of Victoria Jute Mills.

As for the cause of the strike, it was ascertained that some time ago it was proposed to open a labour bureau for each mill with the express object of improving the conditions under which the mill hands worked so that they might not be exploited by Sardars and outside agitators. With that object in view the mill authorities opened a register of their employees and prepared what was known as a service card for each operative. This card contained personal details of men. It was further proposed that a photograph of each mill hand should be attached to the service card and the same should be kept in the mill books. It is stated that the Victoria mills had taken about 200 and the Angus Jute Mill had taken about 1000 photographs. The mill hands, it is stated, objected to be photographed when the authorities of the mills stopped taking the photographs. They tried to explain to them the service cards and the photographs were being prepared for their own benefit and not for any sinister motive of the mill authorities as alleged by some agitators. The mill hands wanted the return of the photographs but the authorities told them that they could be got

from the photographers at the flat rate of Re 0-3-6 per photograph. The mill hands, it is stated, refused to pay and demanded the return of the photographs as also of the negatives free of cost. The mill authorities, it is stated, refused to comply with their demands and the men went on strike. The other demands which are now being added to the demand for the return of the photographs are the dismissal of loyal Sardars, the dismissal of head clerks and increment of wages.

Captain A.F.M. Mohsin Ali, AIRS Sub-divisional Officer of Serampore, accompanied by M.F. Carman, IP, Sub-Divisional Police Officer, went up and down all the affected mills and tried to prevent the people who had been out to get into touch with the people of other mills of the locality, and thus averted further sympathetic strikes.

The authorities of the North Shamnugger Jute Mills wanted to pay their men the wages of the previous week, but, it is stated, they refused to accept them.

The Sub-divisional Officer of Serampore issued an order under Section 144 CrPC on Monday, prohibiting an assembly of five or more persons and forbidding the holding of public meetings and the carrying of lathis. This order should remain in force for about two months.

About three hundred armed police constables under the immediate command of the SDPO had been posted at different places.

Mr S. Bannerjee, ICS District Magistrate of Hooghly and Rai Sahib T.K. Ghosh Chaudhury, IP Superintendent of Police, Hooghly, visited the places on Monday and met the local authorities at a conference. Vigorous steps are being taken to prevent any further troubles. The situation is quiet.

31. Patna Mazdoor Union Victorious

Searchlight, 9 June 1939.

'You have won. You are victorious. But now there is one danger. In the victory you may forget your union and give up the work of organizing yourselves. Remember if you do so, the demon of capitalism will catch hold of you all. She is ever vigilant and in the look out to exploit you all to suck the blood of you all', said Rambriksh Benipuri.

Proceeding Benipuri said, 'When such is the case, you must be careful of the danger. You must strengthen your union all the more.'

He narrated how the battle had been won on the strength of the strikers and the help of his party and sympathy of the public. It would have been won not in fifteen days but in fifteen hours if the workers had acted up to his expectations. They had fallen far short of that. Only a handful of them went to jail but still it did not matter and he was not in the least sorry for it. Comparatively the strikers had played a very nice part and he was very well impressed with their deed. The small boy Fakira had specially attracted his notice on account of his bravery... Women also had come out successfully from the test.

'It is clear from the strike', said Benipuri, 'that the day is fast approaching when we would fight the greater menace of Imperialism, Capitalism and Zamindari systems and we will not rest content till we have destroyed them. These immediate gains are nothing to us. They cannot solve our poverty but we will go on pocketing them and prepare ourselves for the final battle.'

'But one thing I want to tell you that preparation for the final battle does not mean that we should fight daily over trivial issues. No, workers, as long as you are working in the mill you must be honest. True fighters have never been found to be dishonest.'

He continued, 'We have won our points no doubt but when some of our comrades are still languishing in jail, until they are released we can't have rest.'

Benipuri mentioned some of the points in the settlement and said that they were better than those on which they were ready to agree before.

He criticized the attitude of the Congress Ministry towards the strike as a whole. Women have been insulted, brave men have been beaten by the police and Sec. 144 had been promulgated for no evident reason. All these showed that the Congress as constituted, could not safeguard the liberty of the people. 'We will have to improve it to meet the growing situation in the country.'

32. Indian Labour in International Arena: Speech of Mr Nimbkar,¹ Workers' Delegate from India, at the 25th Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva

AITUC Papers, File No. 212, 15 June 1939, NMML.

'I would congratulate the Director on his masterly Report, which deals with practically every point affecting industries, trade and social welfare. The document is of particularly great importance to me because of its last chapter, which reviews the work of the International Labour Office for the past twenty years. The general impression left on my mind after reading it is that the Report has a bias in favour of the United States of America and some prominent countries of Europe. India is rarely mentioned, and that too only casually, and I, as a representative of India, feel that I am practically not on the map of the world. Many a delegate before me, representing the workers as well as the employers, has complained in the past that the International Labour Organization is practically a European organization. The Director has answered this charge by saying that the statement may have been correct a few years ago but is not so now. The Organization has directed its attention, according to him, towards subjects which are of concern to extra-European as well as European countries, and has undertaken research work and studies on special conditions and problems that affect these countries. The recent visit of Mr Butler, and some authentic publications, such as *Industrial Labour in India*, are no doubt some proof of this new trend. But I must frankly state that I am not satisfied with the progress made in relation to my country. European countries have advanced industrially, and also in working-class matters. The organizations of the workers in some of these countries are a century old. They have passed through various stages and have secured many concessions affecting the workers' welfare. In a country like India the trade union movement is quite young. The organization dates from 1920. No doubt some of the working-class organizations in my country have objectives which may not fall into line with the ideals of the International Labour Organization. We are a Dominion of Great Britain, and the energies of all politically-minded people are directed towards the realization of our political objective, namely, the independence of our country. The working classes cannot remain aloof from a fight for their country's liberty, so this political aspect assumes larger importance in the movements in my country. I do not mean to say that we undervalue the most vital questions that affect the standard of living and the well-being of the Indian toiler.

No doubt the Trade Union movement is primarily meant to better the lot of the workers under existing capitalist conditions, and for that reason the Trade Union movement in my country is directing its energies to strengthening itself with a view to securing higher pay, reduced hours, legislation on minimum wages, social insurance, better housing, holidays with pay and various other concessions which will improve the standard of life of the workers. Conditions in India are the worst. Wages are very low and can only be compared with those in China. Hours of work are long and factory conditions are not exactly what should be. There is no decent housing. There is no protection of any kind in the way of health insurance or old age insurance. The great number

of the unemployed are not cared for. There are no holidays with pay. There is no security of service, and the right to organize and the right to free speech are curtailed. I know some workers employed by the Government in Bombay, who are on temporary lists for life, without casual leave, regular promotions, holidays, or sickness, old age, or maternity benefits. In fact, they are absolutely unprotected. I know a category of workers engaged in building or other construction work by contractors for public bodies, who earn two or three annas a day, that is, 25 Swiss centimes a day. Is it not shocking? But this is what is going on in India, and is absolutely the common lot of many of the workers.

The Indian working class has fought tooth and nail to win concessions. On various occasions they have been met with bullets, and almost all their activities are frequently suppressed.

The International Labour Office has, no doubt, done a great deal to create an atmosphere with a view to bringing moral pressure to bear on the Government of India to ratify a few conventions and to enact some laws governing conditions of work. But that falls too far short of the expectations of the Indian workers. Last year was a record year for strikes. This means that the Indian worker is becoming more and more conscious of his rights and wants the Government and the employers to satisfy him and to satisfy him quickly. The proverbial poverty of the people generates radicalism, which meets with strong opposition and suppression from the Government. I want to take this opportunity to protest, from this international platform, against the firings and baton charges in industrial disputes and against the suppression of workers' meetings and processions in India.

Mr Joshi on one occasion complained that the International Labour Organization was moving very slowly, and that therefore Communist principles were attracting the masses. I think that this correctly summarizes the position. The International Labour Organization must hasten to render social justice to the Indian toiler. A good measure of work has been accomplished, but has it done much good to the Indian worker? The Washington Convention of 1919, though ratified by the Government of India in 1920, is yet to be acted upon completely. I cannot understand why India is given a separate treatment in that Convention. Article 10 lays down a 60-hour week for India, while the rest of the world is favoured with 48. We have the question of a 40-hour week on the agenda of the Conference. I am with the rest of the world for a 40-hour week, but for us in India a 48-hour week is still an ideal to attain. In 1936 factories were put on a 54-hour week; India today is industrially the eighth country in the world, and I think it deserves better treatment. It is high time that this Conference reviewed Article 10 of the first Convention to put India on a par with other nations.

The Unemployment Provision Convention was discussed last year in the Committee on the application of Conventions, and the representative of the Government of India stated that they have denounced the ratification of the Washington Convention and that the matter now rests with the Provincial Governments. The argument is fallacious. No doubt according to the new constitution of our country, the Provincial Governments are autonomous; but labour is both a central and a provincial subject. The Government of India can therefore move in this direction itself, or use its best offices to induce the Provincial Governments to start measures and to enact laws which will fall into line generally with progressive Western countries.

The Trade Union movement in our country is getting stronger and more united. The Indian worker on the whole is getting more and more class-conscious and therefore becoming radical in his outlook. Due to this militancy, the employers as well as the Government do not encourage the growth of working-class organizations. In spite of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour with regard to recognition of unions, the majority of the employers' organizations do not recognize trade unions, even those run by a more moderate section of our organization. The

result is that the worker is left in a hopeless condition and cannot use collective bargaining to secure redress of his grievances. This results in frequent strikes, which raise a clamour both from employers and from Government spokesmen, and laws are enacted with a view to putting them down. I can understand a Government enacting laws to postpone strikes in public utility services in order to pave the way for conciliation. But I cannot understand Governments when they enforce compulsory conciliation and at the same time declare strikes illegal for a few months during which conciliation proceedings are pending. The Government of India have such a measure in view. The Provincial Government of Bombay have recently enacted a law called the Industrial Disputes Act where sectional and occupational unions are given favourable treatment, and strikes and lock-outs are declared illegal for a period of from four to five months during the compulsory conciliation proceedings. The Trade Union movement is not opposed to conciliation, but as a representative of the organized workers of India I strongly protest against the slavery thus imposed. While this measure was on the anvil, the workers protested by a one-day strike. In spite of that, the measure has been passed, and it will begin operating soon. While I thus criticize strongly the action of our Governments, I have to thank them for the little good they have done. The Government of Bombay are enacting a law for regulating hours of work of shop assistants. This is a very welcome measure. During the last twenty years the Government of India have enacted some laws like the amendment to the Factory Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Payment of Wages Act, which have done some real good to the workers.

Maternity benefit is not yet allowed in all the Provinces, but the most important question before us today is about the Indian States. While laws on some labour problems are being enacted in British India, the majority of the States have no labour laws. Last year a strike took place in the textile industry at Cawnpore, and the capitalists there made a threat to migrate to the Indian States, as there are no labour laws there. I want the Government of Great Britain to use their powers as the paramount power, through the Government of India, with a view to persuading Indian States of nearly 83 millions of people to enact labour laws on the lines of British India. Otherwise the flow of capital into these States will result in lowering the standard of living of the British Indian workers.

In the memorandum on this session issued by the International Labour Office we have been reminded about the representation of colonial and native workers. In spite of this reminder and in spite of the repetition of the resolution of the Conference of 1927 that the native workers of various colonies should be represented in the various delegations coming from imperialist countries, I am surprised to find that there is not a single coloured worker either as a delegate or as an adviser at this session of the Conference. The same can be said with regard to women, with perhaps a little less justification. Do you hope to solve our problems without greater co-operation from the colonial and native workers and the women of the world? For us the slogan 'Workers of the World, Unite!' has tremendous value. It is for the various working-class organizations of the world to see that the so-called backward workers are represented in this Conference. The proletariat of the world makes no difference theoretically amongst itself as to race, caste, creed or colour, and I hope that this will be put into practice at least in future sessions of the Conference.

I have already said that I want ratification of all the labour Conventions in India, with only minor changes if absolutely necessary to suit conditions there. That brings me to the question compelling the Member States to take more action on our Conventions and Recommendations. It is for the higher authorities to suggest ways and means to bring this about. I may incidentally state that there is a growing feeling amongst Indian seamen that they are sacrificed to the British shipping interests and not given their due. A promise given in at the 1936 Session of the Conference by the

delegate of the Government of India to put a stop to corruption in this occupation has not been kept. We must see that our Conventions, when ratified, are properly applied.

Then there is the question of countries like Japan, which are very advanced industrially and which count in the competitive world. If there are no ratifications of Conventions in countries of this type, there will surely be the greatest difficulties for all of us. These problems, which loom large in the worker's mind, have got to be attended to immediately; otherwise there is a fear that so far as my country is concerned the League of Nations has already lost its attraction and the International Labour Organization will cease to have as much attraction as it has even today. The legislature of my country has already turned down this year the proposal for the annual contribution to the League, and the representative of the British Crown had to certify it. That is not a happy situation. I, for one, do stand for continuance of our relations with the League of Nations and with the International Labour Organization, because they have a definite value.

I have once more to draw the attention of the Director to the complaint made every year that Indians are not fairly represented on the staff of the League of Nations and the International Labour Office. As regards contributions to the League we rank fourth on the list. I do not press this complaint only to have my pound of flesh. Why should Britain and France have the lion's share? I want many Indians to be trained in the international atmosphere here in Geneva, as members of that international civil service of which the Director speaks so highly, so that they may go back to their country with a broader outlook and serve it better.

I should have liked to dwell at length on various points in the Director's Report, but there is no time. I thank the Director once more for his very able Report. And I want to remind my fellow delegates that the International Labour Organization was founded, after the proletarian revolution in Russia, to show by example to the world that recourse to reason and moral persuasion will lead to the happiness of the toilers of the world. Will the International Labour Conference fulfill that hope?'

¹ R.S. Nimbkar (1899–1948); joined Dange and others in the Working Class movement in Bombay, and took important part in holding the first session of the AITUC in October 1920 in Bombay. Serving as General Secretary of the Bombay Municipal Workers' Union, he joined the textile workers struggle in Bombay, and was conspicuous in Girni Kamgar Union. He was later arrested in the Meerut Conspiracy Case and was in jail for twelve years along with other leaders. He held various posts in the AITUC, from Treasurer to serving as a member in some of the important committees. He represented AITUC in the attempts at forging unity among the divided central Trade Unions. In 1940, he was again arrested for leading the textile workers' strike in Bombay. Throughout his life Nimbkar remained loyal to the cause of the working class.

33. Phoenix Mill Struggle: Workers Answer Mill Owners' Challenge

National Front, 18 June 1939.

The Phoenix Mill crisis has added one more brilliant page to the history of the Bombay Textile workers. By giving us the first stay-in-strike, the first arbitration, the first preparations for an experiment in the use of tear gas on heroic women workers, the Phoenix Mill Strike has already made unforgettable history. On 10th June, the Red Flag put the question of the Phoenix Mill to all the textile workers, the question of the serious crisis that it connoted and received a thumping, heartening answer.

Workers Answer Yes

Had the workers in all the mills grasped the fact that the attack on the Phoenix Mill workers was the beginning of a general attack on all? If they had, were they prepared to support the heroic

struggle of the Phoenix Mill as the first trench in the battle? And even if they were, would they do it under the Red Banner of the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union (BGKU)? Would they do it in spite of the fact that the Congress Ministry opposed the BGKU and the Phoenix workers in the crisis—oppose a Ministry which sanctioned their wage-increase only a year ago? *They answered with a big yes.*

The BGKU has given the slogan of preparing for a general strike to meet the piecemeal offensive of the employers. Were the workers scared by it or were they willing to prepare? But how to find out their answer? *The BGKU took up a simple test—try to mobilize a relief and fighting fund for the Phoenix Mill, on pay day, i.e., 10th June.* It was the 60th day of the lock-out and sixty days of starvation had not broken the spirit of the workers. They were holding out as the outpost of the textile workers' battle against wage-cut, against rationalization, against victimization.

Planned Campaign

The campaign was carefully planned. The whole textile area was divided into seven zones, to each of which a definite number of mills was allotted. Each zone was put under the supervision of one responsible leader. Each mill in the zone was allotted to five active workers—three men and two women. One of the five was to act as the leader of the batch for the mill. Each batch had one red flag, two sealed boxes for collecting the fund, one poster.

In some mills pay day begins at 9 in the morning, in some, at 1 o'clock after the recess, in all the mills, it is over at 5.30 in the evening. This time pay day fell on Saturday. Hence some mills were working only half day. So at 9 in the morning sixty batches of five volunteers each with sixty red flags, 120 sealed boxes and sixty posters marched from the head office at Parel to the gates of the sixty mills in the city. At 11 a.m. every mill saw a red flag at its gates. The bureaucracy of the mills was furious. The manager of one came out shouting at the volunteers. 'Keep off my gate, 50 yards off; or I will call in the police.' At another mill, the boss knew his workers well, so he tried to cheat. He kept a box near his office and told the workers that that was the box of the Union. They could pay into it. But he had failed to put the hammer and sickle on the box! The workers saw through the trick. They said, they were not paying in a charity box of the *panjrapol*. They went out where the red flag batch was standing. At another mill, a jobber wanted to collect money from his department saying he would pay it in the office of the Union. The workers refused. He threatened action if they went to the boxes. He stood. The workers of the department did not go near the box. In the box of that mill when opened next day was found a note. 'Our jobber terrorized us. But we fooled him. (Here was added some abuse for the jobber). We quietly collected the money near the latrines, converted it into a note of ten and asked (so and so) of another department quietly to put it in the box, while we stood aside and looked on. Salam to the Red Flag.' From one mill came a threatening letter. 'Don't send batches and boxes to our mill.' The BGKU knew the mill. The 'threat' was the outcome of extreme loyalty to the Flag. 'We will collect and come to the head office and pay. Our mill does not need boxes.' Still the boxes had to go, as a matter of discipline, order. Well, they put 100 rupees in the box, 'since the flag had come,' and went with neat currency notes of Rs 150 to the head office! They insisted on a clean receipt to be put in a frame and exhibit—not in the mill, of course, (the Red Flag was not yet ruling!)—but to be shown in the area. It was the mill that topped the collections with Rs 244/1.

Workers Respond Splendidly

The mind of hundred and fifty thousand textile workers was a sealed box. Their answer to the crisis lay hidden in the 120 boxes. Leaders calculated the probable sum; the strength of the answer that would come. Pessimists quoted Rs 1000, optimists 1500, the most confident would not go

beyond Rs 2000. The Bombay textile workers sprang a surprise. The boxes and office collections showed a total of Rs 3315-7-2. The tellers at the cash jumped. One hilarious zone leader snatched a red flag and wound it round his head and with the bare bamboo pole wanted to dance. That was of course not permitted! He had to be serious like a bank-clerk at the counter—only planning a battle against the bankers!

An analysis of the collections shows some very interesting results. The best mills which have paid handsome amounts of Rs 100 and over are evenly distributed in all the zones, which shows that *the appreciation of the crisis is evenly spread throughout the city*. It is not mainly in the area, where the Phoenix Mill is situated. Mills situated at the other end of the city, and not in what is in a sense the mill-area proper, have shown tremendous response. The Standard Mill in the Wadi Zone tops the list. The Jubilee Mill in the Sewri Zone comes second, the Union in Delisle Road Zone third, New China and Moon in the Sewri area fourth and fifth, Dhanraj and Shri Nivas in Fergusson Road Zone 6th and 7th, the Gamdevi Zone at the far end takes the 9th place. There is no zone which is completely dull or unresponsive.

All Mills, whether with the highest wage-average or the lowest have participated in the campaign. The Spring Mill with an average wage of Rs 35 has given a disappointing figure of Rs 23-7-0 while the Morarji Gokuldas with an average wage of Rs 33 gave Rs 78-4-6. The wages in the Jubilee Mill are only Rs 27-8-4 but it came second on the record with Rs 184-3-6.

The struggle against rationalization during the last ten years has been bitter and mostly unsuccessful as such. But both the rationalized and unrationalized mills have been foremost in the campaign. While one mill of the big Sassoon Group paid only Rs 11-8-0 another gave Rs 93-1-6. The Sassoon workers are still behind the Red Flag.

Mills, whose strikes were fought under the flag of the BGKU and were lost due to repression, have refused to desert the BGKU. The Crown Mill is one such and gave Rs 70-1-9 being 14th in the list of 60. The Spinners of the Bradbury Mill belonging to the owner of the Phoenix Mill and whose strike was broken by repression, lathi charge, black-legs, did not fail to put in Rs 26-8-3.

Toilers First and Foremost

Mills where Congressmen of the Gandhi Seva Sangh have been recently active in countering Red Flag influence, also have given their answer. One mill, where recently the Prime Minister was particularly invited and honoured by the boss, came to the Red Flag after getting a dose of class peace and anti-struggle philosophy, with Rs 51-12-0.

Mills, situated in a predominantly *Muslim area* of the city, came to the help of the Phoenix where out of 3000 workers, there are hardly 50 Mahomedans. The three mills in the Madanpura zone gave Rs 99-7-7.

In the Phoenix Mill struggle, there are hundreds of *Harijan workers*, who according to the Secretary of the Bombay Congress, owe allegiance to none but Dr Ambedkar. The Independent Labour Party have kept themselves completely aloof from the Phoenix Mill struggle and the Textile Crisis. Yet the *Harijans* in the Bombay Mills have shown that they are *workers first and Harijans afterwards*. They have rallied most bravely and unstintingly under the Red Flag of the BGKU.

Thus the collections on the 10th June show that every zone in the city, every mill, every department, every community amongst the workers, has rallied to the help of the Phoenix Mill, has accepted the challenge of the employers. They will not allow wage-cuts and attacks on working conditions on the plea of depression. The collections show that the textile workers have appreciated the seriousness of the crisis that is coming, and support the BGKU in its slogans of meeting the employers' offensive.

Workers Answer Millowners' Challenge All Ready for Action

The collections show to those that cavil at the strength of the GKU looking to the small number of its actual membership on the roll, that at least 50,000 workers have rallied under its flag in a most positive, active and conscious manner on 10th June. Another peculiarity of the collections is that it is after full ten years that on a single day such mass-collections on such a large scale flowed into the GKU from all the Textile workers in the city. It was in December 1928 that 140,000 workers had come to the Red Flag with Rs 30,000 as subscription for one month alone. The same fighting confident workers had on one pay day mobilized Rs 8000 for the Defence, of the Meerut Case Prisoners, in April 1929. For the General Strike of 1934 also the Textile workers were swift to act, with both money and men. 10th June shows that they are again on the move. When the giant awakens let the exploiters tremble.

34. On UP Government's Circular: Yusuf,¹ President of the Mazdoor Sabha, Speaks at a Meeting

Hindustan Times, 21 June 1939.

*Kanpur
19 June 1939*

The changed UP Government's policy was strongly criticized at a meeting of the workers held last evening, under the auspices of the Mazdoor Sabha at the Parade Ground. The target of attack was the recent Government circular containing its views with regard to labour.

Mr Yusuf, President of the Sabha, who was in the chair reviewed the labour situation in general during the last four months including the riot period. He accused the employers of adopting a policy of general victimization of the workers in order to weaken the labour front.

Speaking on the Government circular he regretted the changed outlook of the UP Government who he alleged ignored the repeated violation of the agreement reached between the Government and the employers after the general strike. Only the labour leaders, he said, were warned by the Government against disorder. He disagreed with Government's view that there should be no lightning strikes without notice.

Mr Yusuf added that the Mazdoor Sabha could not be held responsible for such strikes till it was duly recognized by the employers. He also disapproved of the Government's suggestion that the picketers should not lie down before the mill gates during the strike.

He contended that when the employers could be allowed to let in the black-legs inside the mills in lorries, the strikers had every right to try to persuade the workers not to do so provided the means adopted for the purpose were peaceful. He declared that the threat of prosecution held out by the Government would not deter the workers from preaching revolutionary principles if the employers continued then offensive against them.

Mr Yusuf pointed out the discontent among the workers due to tardiness in the conciliatory proceedings by the Labour Commissioner. In conclusion he appealed to the workers to strengthen their organization by swelling the membership of the Mazdoor Sabha.

Mr Hariharnath Shastri, blamed the employers for creating communal feeling among the workers and warned the labourers against such a treacherous move. He also urged upon the workers to join the Sabha.

Mr Arjun Arora² stated that the public of the United Provinces felt greatly concerned over the Government's circular which he alleged attacked those very principles which raised the Congress

to such high position. The labourers and the kisans, he said would continue to raise revolutionary slogans and would prove that they were inspired by revolutionary mentality.

¹ Yusuf Meherally (1903–50); born in Bombay; educated at Calcutta and Bombay; founded the Young India Society, 1925; one of the members of the Youth League and launched the National Militia, 1929 and was its General Officer Commanding; founded *Vanguard*, 1929; founder-member, Congress Socialist Party, 1934; member of its National Executive, 1937; Joint Secretary, 1938; tendered resignation in protest against the Party's policy towards Communists, 1939; General Secretary, CSP, 1940; President, All-India Students Federation (nationalist wing), Patna, 1941; member, AICC and Bombay PCC; Mayor of Bombay, 1942 and member, Bombay Legislative Assembly, 1948–50; publications are: *A Trip to Pakistan*, *Leaders of India*, *The Modern World: A Political Study Syllabus* and *The Price of Liberty*.

² Arjun Arora (1912–81); born and educated at Kanpur; his father was a prominent Congress leader; Arjun Arora, when still a teenager, joined the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA); from the early 1930s, he became active in the trade union movement in Kanpur which was a major industrial centre in north India, particularly of textile industry; from 1934 onwards, he was one of the leading figures of the Communist Party of India (CPI) in what is now Uttar Pradesh until 1942 when he resigned from the party; he later organized the Textile Labour Association and was its General Secretary; in 1951, he started *Mazdoor Samachar*, a magazine devoted to the cause of the working class; he joined the Congress and was a member of Rajya Sabha for two terms from 1960 to 1972; between 1974 and 1977 Arora served as Chairman, UP Labour Commission; he along with some other young Congress MPs (known as Young Turks) advocated radical economic policies.

35. On Receiving a Deputation of Textile Workers.

S.A. Dange to Rajendra Prasad, 23 June 1939

AICC Papers, File No. F-35/1939, NMML.

When you were last time in Bombay, you may remember, we represented to you a memorandum on the textile crisis in India and particularly in Bombay and Ahmedabad. The memo at the time was submitted to you unofficially and we had requested you to receive a deputation of textile workers, who would present the same to you. At the time you were to leave Bombay and so you suggested receiving the deputation when you would come next for the AICC.

The workers propose come to the Gowalia Tank in a procession on Sunday the 25th evening. The procession would not stop at the pandal, if there is no space, but would merely take a round and walk its way back, without disturbing the AICC work in any way. During the round a small deputation would step out and hand over to you the memorandum. It will take only a few minutes if you step out to receive the same and let the workers have your Darshan also.

36. The Bombay Girni Kamgar Union: S.A. Dange to Rajendra Prasad, 23 June 1939

AICC Papers, File No. F-35/1939, NMML.

Dear Rashtrapatiji,

When you were last time in Bombay, you may remember, we represented to you a memorandum on the textile crisis in India and particularly in Bombay and Ahmedabad. The memo at the time was submitted to you unofficially and we had requested you to receive a deputation of textile workers, who would present the same to you. At the time you were to leave Bombay and so you suggested receiving the deputation when you would come next for the AICC.

The workers propose to come to the Gowalia Tank in a procession on Sunday the 25th evening. The procession would not stop at the pandal, if there is no space, but would merely take a round and wend its way back, without disturbing the AICC work in any way. During the round a small

deputation would step out and hand over to you the memorandum. It will take only a few minutes if you step out to receive the same and let the workers have your Darshan also.

If that will not be possible, the deputationists will await your pleasure while the procession will go its way.

Hope you will find a few minutes in between, without allowing them to interfere in the work of the AICC, to receive the workers.

All these being working days, there is no time except the evening to come to you, after the factories are closed, Sunday also being a working day this week.

Thanking you in anticipation, and awaiting your reply, per bearer.

37. Indian Capitalists

Editorial, *Leader*, 24 June 1939.

23 June 1939

Deprecating class war, Mr S. Ramanathan, Minister for Public Information in the Madras Government, said in the course of a speech last week that the slogans of labour and socialist parties sounded as empty shibboleths because they had no political bearing upon the conditions prevailing in India today. Somewhat similar views were expressed by Sir Shanmukham Chetty recently. The Dewan of Cochin said that some people had copied from other countries slogans which were absolutely inapplicable to Indian conditions. In his opinion it was absurd to talk of a conflict between capital and labour because there did not exist to any appreciable extent in our country what was usually called the capitalist classes in the West. He said:

Let everyone look round his own district or town in Madras presidency and take statistics as to how many people there are who could be called millionaires and then you will realize the absurdity of the contention that there is such a thing as capital which is out to wage war against or to exploit labourI do not think that except a few handful of persons here and there, we have got anything like capitalist classes in India.

In our city of Allahabad too meetings are organized at which labour leaders condemn the capitalists, and assure the workers that if they keep up the 'fight' those heartless men who roll in wealth and bleed the worker white will soon cease to exist. But where are the capitalists in Allahabad?

There are in the western countries soap kings, oil kings and iron kings who own large flourishing concerns. In Allahabad since there are no flourishing concerns, there can be no capitalists. There are one or two industries which just manage to exist. Supposing the wish expressed in the slogan, 'Punji-wale ka nash ho', is fulfilled, and the industries are brought to a standstill, how will that benefit the worker or any section of the community? We have no hesitation in saying that those who preach class war do a great disservice to the Country. Liberal opinion has always been strongly opposed to this mischievous movement. It is significant that even in Congress circles where Liberal ideology used to be ridiculed, the dangers of class war, as the Madras Minister's speech shows, have begun to be realized. Mere condemnation however is not enough. Practical steps should also be taken to control the activities of those who promote class hatred.



38. The Silk Mill Workers' Union, Bombay:
G.R. Taldeokar to Rajendra Prasad, 25 June 1939.
AICC Papers, File No. G-35, Part 2, 1939, NMML.

Dear Babuji,

We request to be excused for intruding upon your valuable time especially now, when a contentious session of the All India Congress Committee is being held. We would not have taxed upon your time and energy but for the fact that about 1200 workers employed in the Silk Industry in Bombay are undergoing extreme starvation for more than a month on account of an industrial dispute.

For a long time past these workers have been suffering from low wages and difficult conditions of work. Repeated requests and representations to the owners proved futile and the workers had no other course open except to go on strike. Representations in this connection was made to the Govt of Bombay to intervene and to bring about the settlement of dispute.

We regret the Government have not done anything so far with the result that the suffering of the workers is increasing day by day. Further, the workers are being unnecessarily harassed by the Police. There is no knowing how long this state of things will continue. As you are the only person to whom the workers can appeal in their distress, we earnestly request you to do whatever is possible by you to end the sufferings of the workers and side by side to remove their grievances for which they were forced to go on strike.

We have to request you therefore to appoint an Arbitrator to settle the present dispute of three Mills viz., Habib, Vijay and Manohar Silk Mills and to arrange to take back all the workers who are on strike. And further, we have to suggest that you will please request the Government to appoint a Special Committee to enquire into Silk Mill Industry.

Thanking you in anticipation.

39. The Digboi Strike: Sudhindra Pramanik to Rajendra Prasad,
30 June 1939
AICC Papers, File No. G-34/1939, NMML.

[Sudhindra Pramanik was General Secretary of the Digboi Central Strike Committee]

*Digboi, P.O.
30 June 1939*

My dear Dr Rajendra Prasadji,

The workers here greatly appreciate that you have advocated a strong line of action in the Working Committee to induce the Company to accept the minimum terms of the strikers.¹ The Working Committee has sympathized with the workers' just struggle and we are awaiting further developments and prompt and effective intervention on the part of the Assam Ministry.

But the proposed terms of reference to the Conciliation Board has created much apprehension among the workers as to the real intention of this part of the resolution. We do not understand how the Conciliation Board can decide about 'the manner and time of re-employment of workers'. The status quo must be restored before the Conciliation Board can really function. We have made our position absolutely clear in our letter to the Premier and in our telegram of 23rd June to you at Bombay in reply to your suggestion about the Conciliation Board. There can be no question of calling off the strike until and unless all strikers are re-instated (not re-employment on the resuming day, including those who were dismissed during the period under dispute). The terms of reference

of the Conciliation Board should be clear and unambiguous. The Board should give its award regarding the demands of the strikers on all outstanding matters of dispute including demands of Bungalow servants and contractors' labour and all other labour that have participated in the strike. The very fact that the Company has now agreed to take 100 more men (actually surplus or not) has knocked out the whole basis of the strike from the Company's standpoint, as the Company precipitated the crisis owing to its stubborn and persistent refusal to reinstate about 63 dismissed men and to stop further dismissals.

No victimization, and reinstatement of all strikers on the date of resumption, cannot be matter of dispute but an indispensable first condition precedent to any settlement of the strike through the intervention of Conciliation Board.

If, however, it is the intention of the resolution that the Conciliation Board will be appointed to persuade the Company, firstly, to take all strikers back in their previous situations, and then to proceed to deal with all demands of the strikers, it should be clearly understood that the strike cannot be called off until and unless the Conciliation Board can persuade the Company to reinstate all strikers without any exception on the resuming day. It would be nothing short of a grave injustice to the workers if the Conciliation Board attempts to persuade the workers to call off the strike before that, betraying their fellow workers—whatever may be their number. No worker worth his salt will join work leaving behind and betraying a number of workers. This is quite out of question and does not deserve our movement's notice.

We have sent two telegrams to you but no reply has come. We are very anxious to have your views on the matter and hope you would clarify the position taken up by the resolution.

We are also very anxious to know what specific instructions you have given to the Ministry to appoint a Tribunal to enquire into the whole circumstance leading to the firing, and in to the 'whitewashing' Magisterial report. We have also continually demanded a searching enquiry into the Police and Military excesses since the strike started. As there is also no sub-judice case, there can be no legal bar to the appointment of the Tribunal. We would, therefore, beg of you to intimate us what concrete steps the Ministry are likely to adopt according to your instructions to administer little justice and give minimum protection to the strikers in a just and lawful strike against the repressive measures.

Awaiting your early reply.

With greetings and best regards.

Yours fraternally,

¹ A resolution to this effect was adopted by the Bengal Provincial Trade Union Congress and sent to the Congress President by the General Secretary, A.M.A. Zaman.



40. On the Digboi Strike: Joint Secretary, Assam Oil Company
Labour Union, Digboi, to Dr Rajendra Prasad

Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 1-D/1939, NAI.

*Digboi,
3 July 1939*

To:

Dr Rajendra Prasad,
President,
Indian National Congress,
Wardha.

Dear Sir,

The Company has submitted its latest proposal to the Conciliation Board stating clearly that the Company can take back only 2820 permanent and 250 temporary (for 3 months) workers (Total 3070) out of 6100 strikers and that those remaining unemployed (3030), actually 3280 will be given one month's pay and Railway fare to their family and also preference while filling up future vacancies up to the end of July 1940. Mr Hazra also informally referred to your and the Premier's advice to call off the strike on that basis, as the Company is not willing to offer any other terms. This therefore clearly means that according to your advice, 3280 strikers out of 6100 should lose their services for their crime of participating in a just and lawful strike simply because the Congress Ministry in Assam is in a delicate situation and both the Congress and the Assam Ministry are said to be helpless to give any protection to the victimized party, the strikers, or to bring any pressure upon the vindictive Company to induce it to accept the most reasonable terms for calling off the strike.

Mr Hazra definitely stated that his hands are bound down by the terms of reference and definite instruction of the Government as to their interpretation. He is not even entitled to go into the causes of the strike or say whether the strikers' demands are just or whether the restoration of the status quo is the just condition precedent to calling off the strike, whatever may be his views on the matter. He is only to fix the time and method of employment of those Company's employees who will be left unemployed after the termination of the strike. He cannot even do anything for re-employment of 4000 Contractor's labour and 500 Bungalow servants who are outside his jurisdiction. So if the Union does not call off the strike on the Company's terms he will give his own recommendations, time and method of re-employment of strikers within the strictly and limited scope of the terms of reference No. 1.

So, we pointed out to him that there was no need for appointing the Conciliation Board when the Government has already pronounced judgment upon the strikers by taking it for granted from the very start that a large number of strikers (about half) will remain in unemployment. He appreciated our difficulties but pleaded his helplessness in the very nature of the enquiry. He also could not understand why the vital part of the dispute has been left to Sir Manmatha Nath for decision and another... part the dispute to a Conciliation Board without empowering him to go into the justifiability of the strike and the strikers' demands and restricting him from pronouncing his own judgment on the vital issue what should be the just terms for calling off the strike.

You stated in your letter that the terms of reference are wide enough to include our outstanding demands. So we thought as well. But Mr Hazra has told us pleading that the Government has definitely instructed him only to consider the unanimous recommendations of the Court of Enquiry,

not even the majority recommendations. This also definitely excludes the demands of 4500 strikers, Bungalow servants and Contractor's labour.

Under the circumstances, we are really at a loss to understand what is the real intention of the Congress and the Congress Ministry of Assam. When the Working Committee passed that resolution on Digboi strike and gave a stern warning to the Assam Oil Company, the entire nationalist press took the resolution in its face value and appreciated the strong stand taken by the Congress High Command. We are sure, not one of these who appreciated your stand, could anticipate from the resolution of the Working Committee that the Congress President and the Congress Ministry of Assam would give such advice to the strikers under the terms of that heroic resolution as would amount to betrayal of about half of their fellow strikers, as well as 4500 Contractor's labour and Bungalow servants of the same Company.

You would forgive us if we painfully wonder if the operative part of the heroic resolution was meant to be carried out, as the Ministry has evidently given the advice well knowing that the proposed time and method of re-employment will be quite acceptable to the Company, while it will be absolutely unacceptable to the Union and the strikers.

We hope, you would place our letter before the Working Committee sitting at Wardha. We appeal to you once again to do justice to the strikers who are fighting so heroically for their just demands for the last four months. Ten thousand strikers want to know if they can expect minimum justice and protection in a just and lawful strike in the hands of the Congress and the Congress-guided Ministry.

Waiting your reply.

41. Resolutions Passed by Golmuri Tinsplate Workers Union and Copper Corporation Workers Union, Bihar Provincial Trade Union Congress, 18 July 1939

AITUC Papers, File No. 54, Page Nos 375-77, NMML.

Dear Comrade,

I thank you for the above circular letter, I regret, however, that owing to immediate strike possibility in some of the industries, particularly at the Copper Corporation, Moubhndar, Ghatsila, I may not be able to attend the working committee meeting. I am sending herewith three resolutions forwarded by the Golmuri Tinsplate Workers' Union and the Copper Corporation Workers' Union respectfully. If I cannot come and attend the meeting, will you kindly have these moved and adopted in the meeting and oblige.

Further, items 3 and 5 of the agenda refer respectively to 'National Planning Committee', and 'Letter from the All India Kisan Sabha.' Will you kindly immediately send me copies of the 'Letter of the All India Kisan Sabha' and any correspondence that you have received from the 'National Planning Committee', in order to enable us to consider the matters beforehand.

Wishing a successful sitting and with greetings,

Yours fraternally
(General Secretary)

Resolutions

1. Whereas the Management of the Assam Oil Company, Digboi, while agreeing to the principle of arbitration to settle the Digboi strike, have definitely refused to take all the strikers back, and

are thereby cleverly manoeuvring to nullify arbitration; and whereas the workers' struggle at Digboi may consequently be prolonged indefinitely:

This meeting of the working committee of the All India Trade Union Congress urges on the President & Secretary of the Indian National Congress to appeal to the country to contribute funds in aid of the strikers; and also to direct the Assam Ministry to compel the management to accept 'no victimization clause' as condition precedent to any arbitration for settlement.

(Resolution forwarded by Golmuri Tinsplate Workers' Union).

2. That this meeting of the Working Committee of the AITUC views with grave concern the move of the Industrialists at Jamshedpur to get through a piece of legislation in the line of Goonda Act, as foreshadowed by the Managing Director of the Tata Company in his recent address to the Governor of Bihar, ostensibly to cope with the Trade Union movement under the cover of fighting Communist activity, and calls upon the popular ministry of Bihar and the legislature to oppose the move in its entirety.

(Resolution forwarded by Golmuri Tinsplate Workers' Union).

3. This meeting condemns the attitude of the management of the Indian Copper Corporation in violating the agreed terms of settlement as arrived at by the Conciliation Board appointed by the Government of Bihar and in carrying on a persistent policy of repression and victimization. This meeting further calls upon the Government of Bihar to enforce the decision of its Labour Commissioner on the defying management; and if necessary, cancel the mining rights to the Company unless it submits to Government's orders.

(Forwarded by The Copper Corporation Workers' Union).

42. Report of the General Secretary, HEH: The NS Railway Employees' Union on the Condition of Workers at Kazipet and Dornakal, 18 July 1939¹

AITUC Papers, File No. 184/1939, Page Nos 7-8, NMML.

The members of the executive of the Union including the General Secretary started on Friday night on a propaganda tour and visited two important junction stations Kazipet and Dornakal on the 8th and 9th inst. respectively. In the morning the office bearers of the Union went round the quarters of the traffic, loco and engineering staff and enrolled staff as members of the Union and subscribers to the Union Bulletin.

In the evening a mass meeting was held. Messrs N. Ramachandra Rao, Abdul Hameed, Raghavendra Rao,² Akbar Hussain, T.V. Chandriah and A. Doraiswamy addressed the workers. They explained to the employees what the Union had been doing for them and the need for closing up their ranks to have their grievances redressed, and that the Memorandum submitted by the Union embodied some of their most important grievances. Reference was made to the miserable lot of the low paid staff by the sweat of whose brows the Railway was able to earn. Special reference was made to the difficulties of boiler washers gangmen, and coal muckadams. Blocks in promotions was chronic on line as at headquarters.

The following resolution was unanimously passed:

'This meeting of the NS Railway employees at Kazipet expresses its sense of disappointment at the delay in giving effect to the promises made with regard to the construction of an over-bridge for the convenience of staff residing on the other side of the station, and requests the Administration to expedite the construction of the over-bridge and thus removing the risk to the lives of staff and their children when crossing the lines.'

At Dornakal the meeting was held near the Railway Institute and was presided over by Mr Abdul Hameed, Vice-President of the Union.

Mr Akbar Hussain eloquently pleaded for unity of all sections under the flag of the Union. He stated that higher grades of fitters were kept vacant and that there was only one boiler washer who draw Rs 52 in the whole of Railway Running sheds. He referred to the dangers of working on hot boilers and said that the life of a man was cut short by doing such work. Another injustice to workers was the depriving of illiterate fireman the chance of promotion as shunting drivers. This required immediate attention in the interests of fair play and equity. At the time of retrenching workers it was hoped that the principle underlying retrenchment was equally applicable to officers. But experience showed that the number of officers had been steadily rising.

Mr N. Raghavendra Rao, was of the opinion that the Labour Officer should go round and see with his own eyes the difficulties of the poor workers and redress them. The assurance given at the time of taking over the Railway by the Government were ignored. Referring to the special treatment accorded to the Anglo-Indians, he said they were not against privileges of any their of co-workers but only wished that the same privileges were extended to all employees irrespective of caste, colour and creed.

Mr A. Doraiswamy spoke about the inadequate accommodation in Railway quarters. He appealed to the workers to join the Union in large numbers if they desired to have their interests adequately protected.

Mr Md. Hussain in a humourous speech detailed the crude notions that pervaded the brains of some men. He made a pointed reference to the demand of the authorities that staff should apply 15 days in advance to obtain leave and passes etc. In a satirical vein he told the workers that they should instruct their relatives to give the employees 15 days notice before they fell ill or died.

Mr Abdul Hameed in his closing remarks requested that those who were willing to become members of the Union should raise their hands. All the hands shot up and the meeting terminated with a vote of thanks.

The general impression gathered was that the disabilities of workers on line and headquarters were identical and mainly consisted of blocks in promotions, promotion in contravention of seniority, overwork, difficulty in obtaining leave, meagre pay and not infrequently, ill-treatment.

¹ It may be worth one's while in connection with the labour movement in Hyderabad generally to refer to Section IX, Item No. 28 (All Hyderabad Labour Conference), Chapter 3, Part 1, Volume 1939.

² Raghavendra Rao Nandiraju: resident of Secunderabad; son of Bharat Rao; one of the founders of the Nizam's State Railway Employees' Union, 1927; an organizer of the first Railway Employees' strike in the former Hyderabad State; removed from Railway service but later reinstated; led another strike of the Railway employees in 1928; arrested for sedition and released afterwards with a severe warning; suffered as an undertrial prisoner in the Central Jail, Hyderabad for some time, and later from 13.12.1942 to 24.1.1943 in the Central Jail, Gulbarga; imprisoned again in the Central Jail, Hyderabad for organizing a Statewide industrial workers' strike during the 'Quit India' movement 1942; one of the founders of the Hyderabad State Mazdoor Sangh after the Police Action; General Secretary, Railway Union and Vice-President, All India Railwaymen's Federation; Member, Working Committee, AITUC; Founder-Secretary, Hyderabad State Labour Federation.



II 20 JULY–3 DECEMBER

43. Labour and Congress

Editorial, *Leader*, 20 July 1939.

19 July 1939

The speeches delivered at the eighth anniversary of the Madras Port Trust Workers Union by Mr Rajagopalachariar and Mr S. Satyamurti contain such opinion that deserves attention. The latter advised workers not to meddle in politics. 'I appeal to you' he said, 'not to indulge in disputes relating to politics....' So too the Premier asked his hearers to leave political quarrels to politicians. 'Why should you', he said, 'have differences of opinion among you workers over affairs or disputes which politicians will settle?' We agree with the opinion expressed above. It has been alleged that workers are being exploited by capitalists. Certainly this exploitation wherever it exists should be prevented. But so also should the exploitation of workers by politicians be put a stop to. And while we are glad that the Madras Premier warned the workers against the dangers of mixing up trade unionism with politics, it may be pointed out how Congress leaders have misled workers in the past. Mr J. Nehru has written that when he accepted in 1929 the presidency of the Indian National Congress and the Trade Union Congress, he hoped that he might be a link between the two and bring them closer to each other—the National Congress to become socialistic, more proletarian, and organized labour to join the national struggle. 'I felt', he writes in his *Autobiography*, 'that it (the National Congress) represented the only effective revolutionary force the country. As such labour ought to help it and cooperate with it and influence it'. How can workers follow simultaneously the advice given by Mr Nehru—cooperate with the Congress—and that given by the Madras Premier and Mr Satyamurti—do not meddle in politics? We agree, as we have said above, with the latter view. But if Congress Ministers today find that their advice is being disregarded by workers, they should know whom to blame.

Mr Rajagopalachariar deprecated strikes. He said:

'In these days if you strike it will be bad. It will result in great loss to one and all and you cannot trifle with these strikes and take them as a *tamasha*. It is very difficult to get employment these days. The country is poor, capital in our country is shy and people are afraid to invest capital in industrial enterprises. Trade and commerce are in a bad position and if you strike now you will suffer'.

We welcome this change in the attitude of Congress leaders towards strikes. Although employment was even more difficult to get and trade and industry were in an even worse plight during the economic depression of 1930–31, there were as many as 166 strikes in 1931. The men involved numbered 203,008 and the working days lost amounted to 2,408,123. And yet these strikes, instead of being condemned, were applauded. Indeed, the 'moderates' who advised the workers not to strike were accused of being in league with capitalists. One Congress leader interpreted these strikes as a sign of national awakening. How much loss and suffering would have been avoided if the Congress leaders who claim to possess the confidence of the people had realized what Mr Rajagopalachariar has done now, that strikes are not a *tamasha* and that they should not be trifled with? However, better late than never. May it be hoped that in future labour will not be exploited by politicians for party purposes?

The question is of interest to the United Provinces because of the presence here of a class of labour leaders who preach class hatred, compel workers to strike and in other ways try to create differences between workers and employers. We may be accused of being prejudiced against

these leaders and of being partial to employers. But it is of interest to note that the authorities of the Gandhi Seva Sangh who cannot be accused of being in league with capitalists have not accepted the principle of class struggle preached by the labour leaders of UP. The Sangh believes that labour should be organized on the principle of class collaboration. If the UP Congress Ministry realize, as does the Madras Premier, the importance of Indian industry, and the harm done to it by strikes, they too should take steps to encourage class collaboration and deal with a firm hand those who spread class hatred.

44. Report of the General Secretary, HEH: The NS Railway Employees' Union on the Condition of Railway Workers at Purna and Nizamabad, 20 July 1939

AITUC Papers, File No. 184/1939, Page Nos 4–6, NMML.

A batch consisting of Messrs Abdul Hameed, N. Ramachandra Rao, Akbar Hussain, S. Abdul Huq, and T.V. Chandriah started from Secunderabad on an organizational tour on Purna–Nizamabad section, by 32 down on the 14th July 1939 and arrived at Purna early in the morning. They made house to house propaganda till the evening at Purna and held a mass meeting in the Railway premises under the Union Tree. About 250 staff including Head Clerk, Loco Foremen's Office, PW Inspector, Stationmaster, Sub-Asst. Surgeons (Senior and Junior) and other senior staff of all the departments attended the meeting.

The office bearers of the Union addressed the meeting and the members heard them with keen interest. The office bearers found that the staff of the various departments at Purna were undergoing similar troubles and hardships as at Head Quarters and elsewhere. The following resolution was passed and the office bearers of Purna Branch of the Union were elected unanimously.

'This meeting of Railway employees at Purna sympathizes with the plight of workmen who are provided with only single room to tenants, resulting in meagre accommodation, exposure to rain, hot sun and bad weather and requests the Railway Administration to take up the work immediately on hand in ameliorating the conditions of the workers, (1) by providing more rooms in each unit allotted to the employee and (2) by providing pucca roofing where staff have erected their own temporary zinc sheet roofing'.

The following members were elected for Purna Branch:

1. Mr Stevenson, Hd. Clerk, Loco Dept. Vice-President.
2. B. Subba Rao, Stationmaster.
3. Gafoor Khan, Running Shed.
4. G. Doraiswami, Do.
5. O.D. Nirmal, Asst. Humber-taker.
6. T.T. Ramaswami.

The party started the same night for Nizamabad. In the morning on the 16th they made house to house propaganda and held a mass meeting in the afternoon near the Railway Institute. About 80 employees including the Stationmaster, PW Inspector, Overseer, and Signal Inspector attended the meeting. The following members were elected as representatives of Nizamabad Branch.

1. Mr K. Ramiah, Asst. Stationmaster, Nizamabad.
2. J.P. Vasudevan, SPW, Inspector.

At Nizamabad the plight of the Engineering workers is found to be very miserable. The General Secretary made a note of all the grievances and is dealing with them separately.

My Impressions at Nizamabad

N. Ramachandra Rao (N.R.)

It pained me to see the plight of the Engineering workmen at Nizamabad. Immediately after arrival I with my batch came out of my room at 7:30 on the 16th inst. I found the Gangmen working as usual. I asked them whether they availed Sunday as a holiday. They replied that their fate was always to work without rest or holidays. I proceeded onward and I saw Engineering line workmen carrying heavy materials into the Overseer's Office. The tale of these men revealed the worst treatment meted out to them by the Engineering department. The Engineering line workmen represented that they had to work daily till late in the nights including Sunday. They were not supplied with waterproof coats or winter dress. Their annual increments were stopped several years ago for unknown reasons. They went out on line with heavy loads. When they got into the carriage with their material the passengers insulted them and did not even let them get in. They had to struggle with passengers in the passenger train. If there was any delay or slight mistake on account of several inconveniences they were put to, the consequences were serious. They did not get *batta* when they were out of Head Quarters.

The Gangmen complained that though nearly 2 ½ years elapsed they were not supplied with *Kambals*. To their misfortune the patrol men this year did not get their usual supply of *Kambals* for their patrol duty. They expressed their doubt whether the supply of *Kambals* was stopped to counter-balance the increase of Rs 0-8-0 in the patrol allowance.

The patrol men pleaded that an overcoat was essential for them to protect them from rain. The *Kambal* is so inconvenient for them to walk along in the dark that it prevented them from moving ahead.

Further I was told about the quarters allotted to the porters of the Transportation department. Their plight is miserable. The accommodation is meagre, water supply is scanty and near the taps the wives of the employees have to quarrel daily. There are more than 100 families at Nizamabad. I saw a woman telling the Driver-in-charge that her husband was seriously ill and it pained me to hear the Driver-in-charge replying her that he would send a wire to Purna and get the Doctor in the evening. I shudder to imagine the suffering of the man. He has to wait from morning 9 till about 5 in the evening for the Doctor, suffering from illness without any aid. It is very essential that a Railway Hospital be opened at Nizamabad to render immediate and timely help to these 100 families. At Purna and Nizamabad the Relieving staff of the various departments, including Road Transport department, are put to several hardships as they have no shelter. They are obliged to manage at these places till their relief period is over, experiencing many inconveniences. Some quarters for relieving staff to occupy are badly needed. Mr S. Laxman, Stationmaster, is taking keen interest in the welfare of the staff at Nizamabad, specially of the workmen, which delighted us.

45. Resolutions of the Working Committee of All India Trade Union Congress Circular No. 5, 23 July 1939

AITUC Papers, File No. 185, NMML.

Nagpur
23 July 1939

1. 'The Working Committee of the AITUC places on record its sense of loss and at the untimely death of Comrade Hazar Singh by having been run over by employers' lorry while engaged in peaceful picketing at the Wire Products Company at Jamshedpur. This

Committee further records its sense of gratitude to his memory for his ceaseless and heroic career of sacrifice and devotion to the working class movement and authorizes the President to send the condolences of the AITUC to the family of the deceased.

2. 'The Working Committee of the AITUC has heard with deep regret the sad news of the death of Rai Saheb Chandrika Prasad, who, after a very successful career as a railway officer, devoted his years of retirement to the working class movement and rendered valuable services particularly to the railway workers as one of the ex-presidents of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation, and authorizes the President to send condolences of the AITUC to the family of the deceased.
3. 'The Working Committee of the AITUC views with deep concern and anxiety the developments that are recently taking place in the textile industry resulting in closing down of night shifts in Bombay, Ahmedabad and other places, thereby throwing thousands of workers out of employment in all parts of India. This Committee also fears that unemployment in the industry is further increased due to rationalization and, unless adequate steps are taken by local Governments concerned to check this retrograde tendency, there is the likelihood of critical situation emerging in the near future causing widespread economic distress. Even in the case of those who remain in employment, the employers have been contemplating withdrawal of the recent partial restorations of wage cuts which were grudgingly granted. The Committee, therefore, calls upon respective provincial Governments to protect the already low standards prevailing in the industry and appeals to the workers to organize themselves to resist these threatened encroachments. This Committee assures the textile workers of all possible support and help in defending their standards.
4. 'The Working Committee of the AITUC has watched with increasing admiration the heroic struggle which the workers at Digboi have carried on against the ruthless conduct of oil interests there. The Company's conduct in victimizing as many as 60 innocent workers simply for giving evidence before the Committee of Enquiry, including those that were accepted by the Company, deserves severest condemnation as it has resulted in a prolonged strike, unemployment of more than ten thousand workers and untold hardships and miseries to their families. This meeting further condemns the unprovoked firing on 18th of April last by the military on the defenceless and absolutely peaceful gathering of workers, killing three and maiming some. The Committee, therefore, calls upon the Provincial Government of Assam promptly to take adequate steps to secure the reinstatement of all the workers, to obtain compensation for those who have been maimed and for the families of those who lost their lives. And finally the Committee calls upon the Government of Assam to bring pressure on the Company with a view to their acceptance of their recommendations of the Committee of Enquiry. The Committee protests against the use of Sec. 144 CrPC by the Assam Government against the workers alone while the employers were let loose to carry on vindictive campaign against labour by recruiting black-legs and unjustly discharging the services of many hundreds of workers and otherwise victimizing the workers in all possible ways, and calls upon the Government forthwith to withdraw that order.

'The Committee feels that the workers struggle at Digboi deserves all possible sympathy, support and encouragement of the entire working class in India. All affiliated unions are hereby called upon to send generous contributions for the relief of workers at Digboi and to observe 6th August 1939 as an All-India Digboi Day. The Working Committee wishes

to convey to the dauntless workers at Digboi their heartfelt appreciation for carrying ahead the workers' struggle by their sacrifice and sufferings.

5. 'Having read and considered the invitation from the AIKS to co-operate in formation of a joint committee of workers and peasants for a combined drive against exploitation by the landlords and capitalists, this Committee appoints the following representatives on the Joint Committee on behalf of the Trade Union Congress to carry out the policy and programme that may be agreed upon by the AIKS and the AITUC.
(1) Dr Suresh Chandra Banerjee, (2) Mr Narayandas Bechar, (3) Mr R.S. Ruikar, (4) Mr S.V. Parulekar, (5) Representative of the Cawnpore Mazdoor Sabha.
6. 'The Working Committee resolves that the next session of the AITUC be held in Bombay between the 3rd and 4th week of December next and calls upon the affiliated unions to make it a success by sending as large a number of delegates as possible. The Committee feels convinced that the BPTUC will do everything in its power to make this session a grand success.
7. 'The situation in the Jute industry has caused the AITUC deep anxiety for a number of years on account of retrenchment of nearly two hundred thousand workers in Bengal and by short time working being forced even on those who still remain employed. The conditions threaten to become further accentuated by the resolve of the mill owners of the Jute mills to close 20 p.c. of the looms in the Hessain and 7½ in sacking. The Committee cannot but view with the gravest concern the repercussions of the intended move on the part of the employers and expresses its profound sympathy with the jute workers in this unhappy predicament. This Committee urges upon the workers not to be a party to any proposal that will involve reduction in their earnings but to prepare themselves for resisting it if made.
8. 'In view of the fact that unemployment in jute and cotton textile and shipping industries, and generally in other industries also, has been growing at an alarming rate, this Committee considers that the time has arrived when any further delay in organizing practical schemes of unemployment insurance by provincial Governments will not be only culpable neglect of their duty to the workers, but will inevitably lead to disaster. This Committee calls upon the Provincial Governments immediately to initiate and carry into effect schemes of unemployment insurance to prevent starvation that exists on a large scale and threatens to grow more and more serious as time passes. The Committee also calls upon the affiliated unions to organize the unemployed in the country with a view to pressing their demand on the community and the State, by means of demonstrations, rallies and all other measures of propaganda.
9. 'This Committee accords its whole-hearted support to the demand of the Railway workers in India in the matter of Provident Fund privileges which have been long and unjustly withheld from them and assures them that in any struggle that they may have to wage to secure this demand, all the forces of AITUC would be mobilized in their favour.
10. 'This Committee calls the attention of Labour Committee appointed by the Bihar Government to consider the long standing grievances of workers in Coal Mines and hopes that in making their recommendations the Committee will not fail to make practical proposals for meeting them. This Committee has been shocked by the amazing circular of the UP Government advising the district authorities the sweeping and indiscriminate use of Section 144 and 107 CrPC against the working class movement, particularly against the Communists under the cloak of preventing strikes and labour troubles. This Committee is convinced that this abuse of executive authority is like the issue of general warrant and

the Letters De Catches and can only lead to monstrous injustice and illegalities. This Committee deplores the utter lack of sense of responsibilities in the UP Government with regard to the civil liberties of their citizens. This Committee protests against this unwarranted attack on the freedom of working class movement and ask them to withdraw it.

12. 'The Committee is definitely of the opinion that the application of the Section 153 IPC by the Bombay Government against persons fighting for economic rights is a clear abuse under the most undesirable section of the Penal Code, and urges on the Government not to take recourse to that provision in future. The Committee further urges upon the Government of India to repeal this obnoxious Section.
13. 'The Working Committee has reviewed with grave concern the news of the plight to which the Indian workers in Ceylon are reduced and appoints the following Committee to discuss with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on his return and subsequently to take all necessary steps in the matter: (1) Dr Suresh Chandra Banerjee, (2) Mr N.M. Joshi, (3) Mr Jamnadas M. Mehta and (4) Mr V.R. Kelappa.
14. 'This Committee elects Mr N.M. Joshi as its representative to the Conference to be held in Brussels against War and Fascists.'

46. Chatkal Mazdur Union: Government of Bengal, 26 July 1939

Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Roll No. 11, West Bengal State Archives.

404. It is reported that a joint meeting of the Executive and representatives of Jute Mills in Calcutta, 24 Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly, was held at the BPTUC office on 26.7.39, with Bankim Mukherjee (CPI) in the chair.¹ Discussions centred on the proposed general jute strike (para. 353) as a retaliatory measure to the proposed reduction of looms and working hours in the jute mills. It is said that the majority were in favour of the strike—the dissenters being from Budge Budge (24 Parganas) and Bauria (Howrah). The Budge Budge representatives expressed the opinion that there would be difficulty in their striking particularly due to rivalry between M.N. Roy's group and the BLA. These representatives were, however, of opinion that the mills in these areas would fall in line in the event of a general strike. The attitude of the jute workers to the proposed strike will be gauged further by holding meetings on 29.7.39, in all the mill areas and the final course will be settled at a representative meeting on 30.7.39. The Hooghly workers who apprehend that the mill authorities there will victimize the undesirable elements during the reduction of hands unlike the authorities of other Districts, who they understand, will retrench only temporary hands and men with short services, may go on strike even on 28.7.39, in case their apprehension turns to be true. It is said that the labour leaders were rather unanimous about the possibility of a stay-in strike in all the Jute Mills from 31.7.39.

(2)

423(a) Chatkal Mazdur Union: In continuation of para 404a it is also reported that at the conference resolutions were unanimously adopted condemning the 24 Parganas authorities for refusing bail to the arrested workers of the Shamnagore South Jute Mills; strongly protesting against the threatening attitude adopted by the thana officer of Garulia towards Nishi Kanta Dev, office clerk of the Shamnagore Jute Workers' Union, and urging Government to take cognizance of the affair; and viewing with deep concern the attempt of the managing agents of the Shamnagore South Jute Mill and the Victoria Jute Mill, Telinipara, Hooghly, to foster a spirit of communalism amongst the workers thereby dismissing Hindu workers only, at the instigation of interested parties

and the Muslim League. The followers of A.M.A. Zaman (CSP) have organized a rally of Jute workers of Hooghly district, to be held at a Garden House at Baidyabati (Hooghly) on 30.7.39, to protest against the reduction of working hours in the mills.

(3)

456a. The representative meeting (c.f. para 404A) of the labour leaders and workers from the Jute Mill areas of Howrah, Hooghly and 24 Parganas was held at the office of the above union on 30.7.39, with Bankim Mukherjee (CPI) in the chair, to take the opinion of the representatives of various jute mill areas on their readiness to resort to a general strike on 1.8.39 as a protest against the introduction of the new system. Though the majority were against any immediate strike and expressed that they would be satisfied if an increase of 2 in the rupee be given by the authorities and were willing to wait for one week to allow the authorities to reconsider their demands, the workers in the mills of Hooghly District, of two mills in Budge Budge, two in Alambazar and of the Anglo-Indian Jute Mill, Jagatdal (24 Parganas), were in favour of an immediate strike. A Central Strike Committee was formed with the existing committee of the above union and 2 representatives from each mill, as also a committee to wait on the Chief Minister, the Labour Minister, the Labour Commissioner and the Mill Owners' Association with a view to bring about a satisfactory solution to the problem.

(Note: A full report on the resolutions adopted at the meeting have already appeared in the Press). It is said as decided in the meeting, the workers of every mill will approach the authorities on 31.7.39 with the demand for increment and no retrenchment and if the same is not conceded, it is apprehended that a immediate general strike will be launched from 31.7.39 in some of the mills if not in all.

(4)

Chatkal Mazdur Union²

126. At a discussion held on 4.8.39 it was decided to ask the BPCC for a constructive programme as an alternative to a general jute mills strike which might not prove successful. Subhas Bose promised to ask the BPCC to observe a day in connection with the jute situation, and asked the union to refrain from promoting communalism among the workers or to give a political tinge to the issue. Sibnath Banarjee, and Dr Charu Ch. Banarjee (both of the CSP) and Rajni Mukharji and Deben Sukul (both of M.N. Roy's group) are in favour of a general strike, whereas the CPI, BLP, and BLA, are against such a move. On 29.7.39 a meeting was held at Dhangartolla Maidan, Ghosuri, Howrah, under the presidentship of Biren Bhattacharji (The speakers³) explained to the audience the harmful effects of the changes in the jute mills, and commented on the union's proposal for an increase of two annas per rupee in wages in case of the introduction of the 40 hour week. It was stated that the workers would be forced to go on strike if their demands were not granted.

¹ Among those present at the meeting were: Bankim Mukherjee (CPI), Sibnath Banerjee (CSP), Dr Suresh Banerjee (CSP), A.M.A. Zaman (CSP), Rajani Mukherjee (M.N. Roy's group), Ramani Guha Roy, Dr Charu Bannerjee (ED, CSP), Sisir Roy, Nripen Chakraborty, Mani Mukherjee, Jogen Sircar, Dayaram Beri (BLA), Thakur Singh (BLA), Ram Chandra Awasthi alias Manna Babu, Nishi Kanta Deb, Ram Chandra Rao, Noor Mohammed, Biren Bhattacharjee, Abdul Hamid, Tilakdhari Singh and others.

² Mrinal Kanti Bose (BPTUC), Dr Suresh Banerji (BLA), Bankim Mukharji (CPI), N. Dutt Mazumdar (BLP, CPI), Deben Sen (BLA), Sibnath Banerjee (CSP), Nanigopal Mukherji (CPI), Sisir Roy (CPI), Nausher Ali, Muzaffar Ahmed (CPI), Abdul Rezak Khan, (ED), Somnath Lahiri (CPI), Subhas Bose.

³ Sibnath Banerjee (CSP), Biren Pal, Nani Sen (CPI), Kalipada Mukherji (BLP).

47. A Police View of Labour

National Front, 30 July 1939.

30 July 1939

‘The tidal wave of workers’ struggle continues to rise engulfing even larger sections of workers in every industry in every province. The consciousness of the Indian toiler, his will to organize, unite and resist oppression, to attain manhood rises. But that is not how the matter appears to the warped vision of the police. The Bombay Police report records that there were 61 strikes in the city of Bombay this year as against 39 during the last year. ‘The increase’ says the report ‘was mainly due to the activities of the local Communist agitators, whose regular routine is to foment unrest among workers’.

Sir A.D. Dalal, the Managing Director of Tatas, Jamshedpur, recently demanded in a speech made at a dinner party that Communists be removed from the industrial area by the use of Goonda Act.

The District Magistrate of Benares has issued an absurd notice against two local comrades, S.P. Tripathi and Satyabrata Das Gupta, who have been organizing the Municipal workers of the city. The comrades are forbidden from addressing any meeting of workers, or circulating any document relating to labour agitation among them. In justification of this order, the Magistrate suggests that they are ‘professional labour agitators’, who collect large sums of money in the guise of subscriptions to worker’s unions and propose to interfere with municipal employees in a manner so as to be likely to cause inconvenience to the general public.’

In Madras, a similar notice has been served by the Police Commissioner upon Mr Illango, an active trade-unionist and Joint Secretary of the Tamil Nad Congress Socialist Party, preventing him from addressing any public meeting for two months.

In every one of these cases, it is the bureaucracy, police or vested interests under a Congress Ministry riding a high horse against labour. It is the result of the policy of ‘appeasement’ which our ministries are adopting towards the vested interest. It is also the result of the two commandments issued by the Bombay AICC: ‘Thou shall not commit satyagraha without the previous sanction of the PCC’ and ‘The PCC shall not out-step the Commands of the Ministries.’ The bureaucracy is obviously emboldened and no wonder.’

48. Anti-Communist Circular Denounced at the Meeting of the Working Committee of the UP Provincial Trade Union Congress

National Front, 30 July 1939.

30 July 1939

‘This meeting of the Working Committee of the UP Provincial Trade Union Congress deplors the circular of the Chief Secretary of the UP Government declaring that proceedings under Section 153A and 107 should be taken against the Communists and others who incite class hatred leading to strife between employers and employees. It is the declared policy of the Congress to protect the right of the people to hold and propagate their political views. Further, the committee is surprised to find that an attempt is being made to bring the disputes between labour and capital within the purview of 153A which is only meant for communal hatred.

The Committee urges upon the Government to immediately withdraw the circular....

The Muthra Congress Committee too has passed a resolution condemning the circular.

The Council of UPCC, in a camera session, on July 5, is reported to have discussed the Chief Secretary's circular and the Government's letter to the Mazdoor Sabha. The ministers attended....

The UP Ministry is reported to have given an assurance that the circular will not be acted upon. The democratic voice of Congressmen, and the indignant protests of workers expressed through repeated demonstrations in every important town of UP, have forced the ministry to draw in its horns. But ceaseless vigilance is necessary. An abiding united front of workers with Congressmen is the only guarantee that the ministry will keep to its words and not be rushed by the bureaucracy to resort to police measures against the working class movement.'

49. First Victories: Greater Efforts

National Front, 30 July 1939.

The Railway Workers of Bombay have set an example which must be followed by other Railway Workers throughout India with a view to secure their various demands. At Madras, on the first of May, the All India Railwaymen's Federation decided to place before the Railway Board some of the important demands for final decision. Accordingly those demands were placed before the Railway Board at Simla on the 19th May. Due to some difficulties the Railway Board decided to meet the Railwaymen's Federation in Bombay at a special meeting. This meeting was fixed to be held on the 20th July. At this meeting the Railway Board was to give its final reply to the various demands placed before the Board by the Railwaymen's Federation.

United Effort

On the eve of the meeting the Railway Workers of Bombay decided to demonstrate their solidarity and support to the demands. In accordance with the resolution of the AIRF at Madras the Railway Workers of Bombay had formed a Coordinating Committee. This Committee included in it all the Railway Unions of Bombay, viz. The GIP Railwaymen's Union, the BPT Railway Workers Union, the BBCI Railwaymen's Union, the BBCI Railway Employees' Union, and the GIP Accounts Staff Union. This Committee is conducting joint activities on agreed programme. Accordingly they fixed the 19th July as the day for the demonstration.

Under the auspices of this Committee a vigorous campaign was carried on. Hundreds of meetings on all the railways were held. Several handbills were issued. Vigorous propaganda through the public and Union papers was carried on. Most effective use was made of a lorry fitted with loudspeakers. All the active workers on BBCI, GIP and other railways met several times and conducted a very systematic campaign to make the 19th July a success.

Great Success

Every railway worker began talking of 19th July. In the workshops, at stations, at railway quarters, the only important topic among the Railway Workers was the 19th July, 7 demands put forward by the Railwaymen's Federation, and the meeting between the Railway Board and the Federation.

From 3 p.m. on the 19th July batches of Railway Workers from various parts began to appear on the scene. Several Workers who were not on duty at the time enrolled their services voluntarily to make the demonstration a success.

At 5:30 p.m. the time scheduled for people to assemble at Kamgar Maidan, Parel, the workers began to assemble in large numbers. First came the procession of 4000 Railway Workers from GIP Railway Parel Workshops. Then came the powerful procession of brave fighters of Matunga Workshop of GIP Railway which numbered 3000. Then came the batch of 100 BBCI. Workmen from Virar, a place nearly 35 miles away from Bombay. Then came the procession of BBCI

Railway Workshop. From Bombay Central, Kurla, Kalyan and various other places, batches of workers assembled in large numbers at the Kamgar Maidan.

A huge meeting of 15,000 Railway Workers was held. At this meeting, Messrs Khedgikar, M.A. Khan, B.T. Ranadive, Jogalekar, and others spoke. After the meeting the procession started. Hundreds of J.P. Red Flags, with several slogans and hundred torch-lights, the procession began to march.

Thundering shouts of 'LONG LIVE THE UNITY OF RAILWAY WORKERS' roused the whole population. The spectacle was really inspiring. 15,000 Railway Workers all of whom had worked that day for not less than 8 to 10 hours and who had not taken their meals and therefore hungry, were marching unmindful of personal inconveniences and sufferings.

They walked 8 miles through the crowded localities of Bombay reaching Azad Maidan, at Borei Bandar at 8:30 p.m. Already a huge audience of nearly 5000 Railway Workers had assembled there. Added to this these 15,000, a huge meeting of 20,000 Railway workers was held.

The meeting was addressed by Messrs N.M. Joshi, J.M. Mehta, R.A. Khedgikar, S.S. Mirajkar, M.A. Khan and other leaders who had come from outside Bombay. All the speakers warned the Railway Board that if their demands were not granted the united railwaymen shall prepare the general strike on all railways. The workers gave their assent to this declaration of the speakers by thunderous applause.

This was the first demonstration of its kind in the history of the Railway Workers' movement. The Bombay Railway Workers and the Coordination Committee consisting of different Railway Unions in Bombay deserve congratulations for the powerful demonstration they organized.

50. Talks with the Indian Tea Garden Association:

Zetland to Linlithgow, 4 August 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

4. I then had my talks with the representatives of the Indian Tea Garden Association. They took a somewhat gloomy view of the situation in Assam and asked me whether I could give them any assurance that the Governor would bring his reserve powers into play in the event of a further serious deterioration in the situation. They spoke of the possibility of developments amounting, to use their own words, to a state of anarchy and bloodshed. I felt justified in assuring them that if such a state of affairs did indeed arise and the Ministers proved incapable of dealing with it, they might count upon the Governor taking action, and I said we had sufficient force within reach to enable him to do so with effect. We discussed the position of the Committee which was set up some little time ago to enquire into the cause of labour unrest on the tea gardens and they said that no possible good could come from the labours of the Committee so long as Messrs Chandra and Sharma were members of it. I felt constrained to admit that this did not indeed appear to be so and I said that I understood, for the time being at any rate, that the Committee was in a state of suspended animation. They were particularly disturbed by a rumour to the effect that the Ministry contemplated withdrawing police protection from these who have been receiving it and further by much talk on the part of the agitators of pursuing their agitation until the British are obliged to withdraw from the tea gardens altogether. I told them that they must not pay too much attention to talk of this kind, which, I felt sure they must know, was always prevalent in India at the times of unrest. I think that they left after half an hour's talk feeling somewhat happier about the position, particularly when I told them that the Governor had instructions to keep a very sharp eye on developments and to keep you and me constantly informed.

51. On the Labour Movement: S.P. Thana to Secretary, Home, Bombay Government, 5 August 1939, Report of a Meeting at Ambernath on 5 August 1939

Home Deptt., Special Branch, File No. 927-A, Part III, Maharashtra State Archives.

D.K. Desai said: 'Brothers, no meeting of labourers could be held here for a long time as they were not so much organized. We are well organized today and so we are holding this meeting. The number of members of the Union has increased from 400 to 675 during the last 2 months. We are fortunate enough to get Mr Parulekar to address this meeting. The Manager of the factory will be shocked to hear of the meeting today, because he will not like the labourers to unite. The Congress Govt has passed the Tenancy Bill to our satisfaction. Our Union has been recognized. We are getting our grievances redressed. We must be bold day by day. The farmers of Kalyan Taluka numbering about 35/40 thousands are quite ready to back you up. Some of them are already present here. There must be co-operation between the farmers and the labourers. By our co-operation we must humble down the rich.

'The Congress Govt has begun Prohibition of Drinks from the 1st of August 1939. No doubt it has good effects. But at the same time Congress Govt must bear in mind not to tax us more. They may bring a cut of Rs 25 in the pay of the higher officers. It must be brought to the notice of the Govt that taxes exacted from the rich are indirectly exacted from the poor and hence the poor people have to fast. A great movement of the labourers and the farmers is to be launched after a month. The thousands of labourers and farmers should join it.

'The Talati of this place had submitted an altogether false report of my lecture in the meeting on 7th May 1939. These Talaties and Police are in the habit of stealthily gathering information. These rogues come in our houses and *chawls* and make false reports. They must bear in mind that if they continue to do so they shall be transferred from this place. The Police had similarly made a false report in 1934 also. So they should not be allowed to approach you. Drive them out if they come to you for any work. In many ways your wages are being cut without your knowledge. You should be careful and must make complaints to the Manager if there is any cut'.

Dhondo Ambadas said: 'The farmers are the pillars of the nation. They work for 24 hours and feed the people. But they themselves do not get sufficient bread—whereas the rich without working at all roll in luxuries. So make your Union a strong one.'

S.V. Parulekar spoke in Hindi. 'We were not', he said, 'able to meet for a long time due to rains etc. But the main reason is we were not strong enough up till now. But now we are strong. The proof of this is the presence of so many policemen here. The owners and the Govt are afraid of the power of labourers. The influence of (the) Red Flag of the Labourers is increased (sic) day by day. At Nagpur a Conference of All India Labour Unions was recently held. A resolution that if the Govt did not pay subsistence allowance to the unemployed labourers, an All India Labour Strike should be begun, was passed. Strikes begun in different places at different times were suppressed by the Govt. So if an All-India Strike is begun on the same day the Govt cannot suppress it. Such a general strike is to begin in coming October. In Bombay there are 42,000 unemployed labourers. After 3 months they shall be united and will make a strike. Railway labourers have likewise resolved to strike when the strike of mill labourers begins. If an all-India strike begins, it will be impossible for the Govt to arrest and put all the strikers in jail. So don't fear. Make Unions and unite with the Kisans. If the General Strike of labourers and farmers is brought about, Govt cannot do anything. Our main grievance—to increase our pay by 50%—should be put forward.

‘Now a world war will begin. We must take advantage of this, this time, for last time only the rich were much benefited and the poor only died. The labourers in Russia took advantage of the last Great War and established their own Government. In this way the poor of the labourers in the world is becoming stronger and stronger. We want to establish our own Govt. We don’t want the rule of Mr Munshi or of white men. The Labour Officer, Mr Deshmukh, has been sent to Cawnpur (Kanpur) for training and when he returns he gets a fat salary of Rs 250, and he may speak kindly to you. But tell him boldly that you will not listen to him but keep the Red Flag flying on forever. Take active part in the coming General Strike and let the Govt know that we are one and the same’.

He further said in Marathi: ‘My brother farmers, from the movement begun in last year, though was unsuccessful, we learnt much at least, that anything can be accomplished if there is a Union. By this experience we will tell the landlords that they will not get anything at all next year. The Govt may help the landlords, but if all the farmers unite Govt can not do anything. Only the farmers of 3 villages in Ratnagiri Dist defeated the Govt in their plans. When the officers had gone to attach their things nothing was found and there were no customers for the petty things they got. So they prosecuted their leaders. The leaders had to be released on bail. The *Mamlatdars* and the officers could not do anything. So if the farmers of the 3 villages can fight and be successful, what if all the farmers join? The Congress Govt is the govt of the rich and landlords. We want the Govt of the labourers, not that of the rich and well-to-do people. Decide to establish your own Govt in this way’.

D.K. Desai again said in Marathi: ‘Some people try to make the strike unsuccessful, threaten women labourers saying that they shall be dismissed if they join the Union. The women should not be deceived by them in this way. Here only 200/250 women are employed, but in Bombay nearly 25/30 thousand women are employed. If these women are dismissed they (Bombay women) also will begin strike’.

Then the meeting terminated after usual labour slogans.

52. Use Hand-Made Cloth Only: Resolution of Handloom Weavers of Kwagam Nadu and Srimushnam Belonging to the Senguntha Mudaliar Community

Hindu, 9 August 1939.

8 August 1939

More than three thousand handloom weavers of Kwagam Nadu and Srimushnam have resolved not to go in for either foreign or mill-made clothes, irrespective of their cheapness when compared to the hand-made cloth.

A meeting of the Senguntha Mudaliar community handloom weavers met the day before yesterday at Kwagam Nadu, with Mr Kumaraswami Mudaliar in the chair. It was resolved to restrain the members of the community from going in for cheap foreign and mill clothes and wear them and to communicate their decision to all men of their community in the several villages under the Kwagam Nadu. They were advised to use only *Khaddar* and in the alternative hand-made clothes. If anybody violated their decision he would be ostracized from the Senguntha Mudaliar community and nobody would support him in any matter, whatsoever. Kwagam Nadu consists of Ponparappi, Sirukalathur, Kodukkoor, Marudur, Variyangaval, Elaiyur and Kallathur villages. There are about 2,500 handloom weavers. In Srimushnam village there are about 250 houses and 500 handloom weavers of the Senguntha Mudaliar community.

53. Stiff Picketing at Victoria Mills

Hindustan Times, 10 August 1939.*Kanpur*
9 August 1939

Mr S.C. Kapoor, general secretary of the Mazdoor Sabha, has represented to the president of the Provincial Congress Committee the sorry plight of workers in several mills. He regards the labour situation here as grave and thinks that matters are further deteriorating. He mentions the cases of the New Victoria Mills, the J.K. Jute Mills and the Kamla Hosiery, in particular, as well as the Maheshwari Devi Jute Mills. In consequence of the action taken by the authorities of the above mills, hundreds of workers have been affected. He particularly draws attention to the cuts in the wages of the workers and quotes with approval the opinion of the All-India Conference of Textile Workers, who stated that if the process continued there would be no alternative but to resort to direct action. The UPCC is appealed to discuss the situation and to find a way out before the situation becomes uncontrollable. The suggestion is made that retrenchment and wage-cut proposals should be stayed for the time being and that the Congress Working Committee should tackle the matter on an all-India basis. It is felt that the Congress alone, as the supreme national organization, could deal with the situation.

Following the decision taken at a meeting of the workers last night, strong pickets were posted near the Victoria Mills to prevent workers from going in to take their wages which the management had announced to distribute today. It will be recalled that the management of the Victoria Mills had notified that due to the labourers having launched unauthorized strikes the services of the workers who had absented themselves would be considered as terminated, and their wages would be disbursed to them on August 9 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The labour leaders at a meeting of the workers advised them not to take their wages as it was a clever device of the employers to break their front. In consequence, picketing was stiffened today, but in spite of it, workers could not be stopped and a large number of them got in. Nine pickets were arrested in the first rush when they tried to stop the workers from going in. Later the leaders finding the job futile withdrew the pickets and about a thousand workers took their wages.

The Employer's Association have addressed a letter to the Secretary to Government, the Premier, and the Minister of Industries, in regard to the representation made by the Mazdoor Sabha regarding the case of 11 men who absented themselves after the Communal riots, and who, it was stated, had been dismissed. It was also stated that the Labour Commissioner had informed the Sabha that he could not get the employers to agree to reinstate these workers. The Association say that they have not seen the said representation by the Sabha nor have they been favoured with the letter said to have been written by the Labour Commissioner to the Mazdoor Sabha, but they want to make it clear that no question of dismissal of these men arose. On their own statements they absented themselves during the communal riots. The Association agreed to reinstate these men as substitutes, should they have presented themselves regularly and their work and conduct remained satisfactory, there was no reason why they should not have been re-absorbed into the permanent establishment in due course. Four men presented themselves and are working in the mills, two men presented themselves and were offered substitute work, but this they refused and demanded reinstatement on their looms, and since then they have not again presented themselves. The remaining five have never presented themselves at the mills. The Association states that should these men present themselves, within a reasonable time, the members concerned are quite prepared to give them work as substitutes and in accordance with the undertaking given by the

Association, if their work and conduct remain satisfactory, they will be re-absorbed into the permanent establishment in due course.

54. Mazdoor Sabha's Complaints against Employers:
Secretary, Mazdoor Sabha to Secretary, Deptt. of
Industries and Labour, UP

Hindustan Times, 11 August 1939.

Kanpur
10 August 1939

'The Government is aware of the fact that about four months ago the New Victoria Mills introduced a short working week of three days reducing the earning capacity of the 4,000 workers by half. During this period about 500 workers have been completely retrenched from the mill. The earnings of the workers were only annas 12 to a rupee in a fortnight. Now after the strike in this mill, the employers have notified the dismissal of all the workers in the mills.

'The J.K. Jute Mill is already working only for three days in the week for 14,000 workers. Now the M.D. Jute Mill has put up a notice of closing the mill. It will render 1,350 workers unemployed. The Cawnpore Textile Mills have just retrenched 37 men from one department. Now they propose to close the whole hosiery section which will render 300 workers unemployed. J.K. Hosiery has also notified to close down, thus rendering another 175 workers unemployed.

'The Luxmi Ratan and Elgin Mills have introduced unauthorized wage-cuts. The Victoria Mill has put in an application demanding 12 per cent wage-cut. Others are likely to follow after its decision.

'Retrenchment, unemployment, short-time, and wage-cuts are following one another in quick succession. Already more than 10,000 workers have been affected by partial or full unemployment during the past four months. These measures have created a very tense situation. If the situation is not immediately controlled, widespread unemployment and worsening of the workers situation is threatened. Unless the Government is able to help in the matter workers will have no alternative but to defend their interests by their own actions, and another strike may become inevitable.

'We would point out that it cannot be left to the private decisions of the employers to decide upon questions which affect the livelihood of thousands of people and the interests of the community as a whole. It is the duty of the Government to take an active hand in laying down conditions and safeguards from the point of view of social interests.

'Further we would emphasize that when thousands of workers are rendered unemployed matters cannot be left to the unemployed workers to shift for themselves. It becomes necessary to make arrangements for their sustenance.

'We would request the Government to take the matter immediately in hand and devise necessary measure to meet the situation. If the Government thinks necessary, we can wait on the Ministers to explain our point of view'.

The meeting asks the workers to close up their ranks and immediately set afoot preparations for a widespread general strike which may have to be resorted to, if the owners remain obdurate and the ministry fails to protect employment and wages from being attacked.

The meeting immediately decides to start a Mobilizing Fund and hold weekly rallies for organizing the workers.

The meeting appeals to the public, to all Congress organizations and individual Congressmen to bring Ministerial and public pressure on the Textile owners who threaten to wipe out a wage

increase given by the Congress Ministry and render further progress impossible. It is the firm conviction of this meeting that the combined pressure of workers, Congress organizations and the public will be strong enough to resist the new offensive which threatens to create unemployment, and starvation of thousands and challenges the very implementing of the Congress Manifesto.

Considering the fact that the offensive is planned on an all-India scale, the meeting suggests that an immediate conference of delegates from textile centres be called to adopt plan of action on an all-India scale.

55. A Uniform Labour Policy

Editorial, *National Front*, 13 August 1939.

August 1939

The Labour Ministers are to meet to formulate a uniform labour policy. What is that policy likely to be and what should it be?

Last year saw a record number of strikes, the highest during the last twenty years. The upsurge continues, of labour unity, organization and struggle. Workers in every industry show signs of a new awakening and consciousness. The most militant class of our nation, is rising on its feet, calling every member to join their organization—the Union, and battle for their elementary human rights to live decently and work honourably.

The imperialists have all along been of the opinion that all this was an outburst of anarchy encouraged by the extravagant promises made by the Congress and due to license enjoyed by the agitators under Congress Ministries. The only solution it suggested was 'firmness'. This view has been systematically propagated through the Anglo-Indian press.

The owners have been demanding from the Congress defence of their interests too and pleading 'condition of the industry' as their argument against redressing workers' grievances.

The vested interests naturally misunderstand and misrepresent the labour movement which has never been and could not be the work of a few agitators. This should be plain enough to any decent democrat, any serious revolutionary. But this was not self-evident to the Congress High Command and the Ministries.

They began arguing with the owners. They considered their only task to be to find out a via media between the workers' demands and the capitalists' interests. They ignored the lesson of history that vested interests never voluntarily give up their ill-gotten gains, that removing workers' grievances means fighting capitalist greed. They asked the workers to keep quiet, disarm themselves and trust them.

The workers gave them the chance. Where the workers went into action, the Ministries considered it to be their duty to keep 'Law and Order'.

It seemed lack of policy and groping for one. But drift or neutrality itself is a policy and produced very definite results. When the leadership of the foremost people's organization stands between the exploiter and the exploited, the exploiter uses the occasion to devise ways and means to remain always at the top and maintain his ill-gotten gains. It is capitalists who control the industry. They can create the industrial situation.

This policy of impartial neutrality, of seeking contacts with the owners, of disarming the workers, has already created havoc. It has led to the suppression of labour and the use of every repressive measure from the imperialist armoury. It has encouraged the owners to launch an offensive.

The Congress was pledged to help the workers, improve the workers' standard of living. The workers everywhere are fighting for it. The owners have launched a counter-offensive against the

existing standards of the workers and to blow up any future ameliorative measures by the Congress Ministries. In the biggest industry of our country, the textile, the owners are demanding the withdrawal of the wage-increase granted by the Congress Ministry itself. They refuse to wait even for the report of the Labour Inquiry Committee appointed by the very Government, which gave them the Black Bill. They are consulting together on an all-India scale, the workers are planning all-India action. Captains of every industry as also the workers, are feverishly awaiting the outcome.

Maintenance of 'Law and Order' by the Congress Ministries, when Imperialism reigns supreme, vested interests continue intact, has gone so far as to encourage Maxwell, the Home Secretary of the Government of India, to ask the Home Ministers of the Congress for a Common Front. The notorious Circular of the Chief Secretary of the UP Government was not a scrap of paper. The bureaucracy instead of being kept in leash, controls the situation.

Stark repression stalks the labour world. Sec. 144 always follows, very often precedes every strike. Women pickets are raped by employers' goondas. Strikers—men, women and children—are not safe from the police lathi. Imprisoned militants have to resort to hunger-strike in solidarity with their brothers left on the battle front in defence of the right to strike. Mass arrests are a common phenomenon.

A glance at a week's news on our labour pages (422 and 423) will disclose how grave and unbearable the whole situation has become.

The most distressing part of the position is that general deterioration has gone so far that the President of the Congress and the author of the Election Manifesto himself are taken in by the owners' claims and formulate owners' policy towards labour as sound labour policy. We are not concerned herewith the merits of the case or the facts behind the Jamshedpur Award but the generalizations regarding policy it makes, the pre-suppositions on which it is based. Workers are sermonized against lightning strikes but the recognition of the Union is not made imperative. The owners are advised either to recognize the Union or accept the Labour Commissioner. The contention is accepted that watchmen should have a separate union and not participate in strikes. It is like asking soldiers on sentry duty not to be bound by the discipline of the army. The company's word is taken for granted that it has given up organizing hooliganism and the whole blame put on the existence of rival unions. It is completely missed that it was financed hooliganism by the company that led to rival unions and split the workers' ranks. The company's crimes are glossed over; the inevitable weaknesses of the workers' movement—when it is kept suppressed—are made the points of departure.

Yes, a uniform labour policy is immediately necessary but it must be squarely based, not on the policy of reconciling the vested interests, not on the maintenance of imperialist Law and Order, but on the labour programme of the Congress itself.

The attitude of the Congress towards the extra-parliamentary front, of which organized labour is the shock-brigade, has been outlined in the Election Manifesto thus:

'The Congress has always laid stress on the development of the strength of the people and the forging of sanctions to enforce the people's will. To this end, it has carried on activities outside the legislatures. The Congress holds that real strength comes from thus organizing and serving the masses.'

The Union is the common shield and united sword of the workers. Recognition of the Union has become the foremost demand of the workers today and it is raised in every strike. The vested interests are most bitterly opposing it for they know that this, with the rising working-class movement, will lead to the transformation of existing unions into mass unions. This is just what they are out to prevent—the greater organization and further strengthening of the Unions. The first duty of Congress Ministries is to enforce on the owners compulsory recognition of existing unions.

The Election Manifesto cries out to the Congress Ministries: Do not use imperialist law against the workers; they are your own brothers. Give them full Civil Liberties so that they may steel themselves through the partial struggles of today against their immediate exploiter for the final struggle of tomorrow against the common and main enemy of us all—British Imperialism.

The Election Manifesto guaranteed the workers improvement of their condition. The immediate issue is to prevent the worsening of existing conditions of life and labour. The least that is expected of Congress Ministries is to tell firmly the owners: No wage-cut, direct or indirect. This will prevent the rot, stay the offensive of the vested interests. This will inspire confidence in the workers and strike terror among the bosses. With the working class behind its back and the employers in their places, Congress Ministries must announce their joint programme of A MINIMUM LIVING-WAGE, OLD AGE AND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE.

Immediate introduction of a few Bills, guaranteeing these, must be the people's final ultimatum to the owners. The industry has to pay for the welfare of labour or the employers have to face the wrath of the people and the rigour of the law. This is the plain-speaking hard-boiled owners will understand, and this is what is expected of them, without any delay, as Congress Ministers. There is no other course.

The working class movement has reached a new stage. The spontaneous phase of 1924–28 period is over when it fought elementally, formed its organizations, became conscious as a class and raised the Red Flag high. For a decade after it, it successfully weathered all storms, faced and overcame disruption in its own ranks and inside its own organizations, stood up to brutal police terror and did not collapse under it. It created cadres from its own ranks and did not remain dependent on the outside friends to help it or foes to mislead it. Against all odds, it continued fighting rear-guard actions and also frontal battles. It lost more often than not. Today it is rising anew, but it is no more what it used to be; it is no longer the movement of the vanguard but of the whole class; it is richer with experience, stronger in organization and genuinely inspired by the ideology of a new humanity—Socialism. It has reached a stage where it cannot even be successfully suppressed.

The working class is proud of being a part of our National Front. It fights for the unity of the common front as doggedly as for the unity of its own class. It knows that in unity alone lies strength. It is foremost in demanding a nation-wide struggle through the Congress. It is the sinewy arm of our nation.

The existing policy of the Congress Ministries, the demand of Imperialism and the vested interests on them, is to cut off the arm from the main body.

Unwavering pursuit of Congress policy by the Ministries on a uniform scale will unite our common front more securely, galvanize the forces of struggle and render possible immediate struggles over immediate issues and speed up the final struggle for our national emancipation.

56. Textile Crisis before the Working Committee, Memorandum of the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union to the Congress President for being Placed before the WC.

New Age, Vol. 6, No. 3, August 1939.

Bombay

We would make no apologies for claiming the time and serious attention of the President and the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress to the situation that has arisen in the Textiles. Throughout the long history of the National Movement and the Congress, the economics of the

Textiles have provided the most intense incentives to the politics of the national struggle. Time has now come again that the situation in the Textiles is raising serious economic as well as political problems affecting the nation as a whole.

The mill-owners of Ahmedabad and Bombay, who together produce half the cloth requirements of the whole of India, recently approached the Government of Bombay and their Textile Inquiry Committee with the demand that they be permitted to cut the wages of the workers and withdraw the increases that were given last year. We are not aware of the reply of the Government or of the Inquiry Committee. It is also learnt that the employers interviewed the Governor of Bombay and laid before His Excellency the same demand.

The demand to cut the workers' wages is not only confined to Bombay. It is being supported from the textile mill-owners all over India and is a concerted move of the employers, irrespective of their province or their nationality. Indian and European employers alike are united in this demand and it is a significant fact that just on the heels of this comes the announcement that employers all over India are meeting to take concerted measures.

The reason why the employers have formally approached Government with proposals for a wage-cut and did not proceed straight way to impose it openly on the workers, as they have been hitherto doing, is that the increased wages which the workers are getting since last year have been obtained as a result of the findings of the Inquiry Committees—that the prosperous condition of the industry justified the workers' demands for wage-increases all over the Congress Provinces and as a result of the sanctions given by the Congress Governments to these recommendations.

The Inquiry Committees were appointed on the advent of the Congress Ministries in 1937. Taking into consideration the rising wave of strikes in the Country demanding better conditions of wages and work and in fulfilment of the Congress programme of undertaking steps to ameliorate the conditions of the exploited masses, the Bombay Government appointed its committee to find out, whether wage-increase could be given. The Committee's investigations proved that the industry was enjoying almost boom conditions and had, a windfall in cheap raw cotton, good cloth prices, absence of Japanese competition due to the China War and general trade recovery. The general trade recovery gave the employers normal profits while the unprecedented fall in cotton gave them extraordinary profits. The Committees in Bombay held that from the windfall resulting from this extra factor alone the Industry could give wage-increases lasting for full two years.

This recommendation was opposed by the employers throughout the Presidency. The threat of a general strike from the workers and the pressure of the Government assisted by the facts as found by a thorough Enquiry forced the employers to yield.

In view of this background to the wage-increases the employers, if they wanted to cut down wages again, had to approach Government—if not legal at least for moral sanction—and had to build up a case over again justifying their demand.

The employers in justification of their proposals to cut wages and attack the working conditions of the masses, put forward three reasons which they claim, have cropped up since the reports of the Committees. One is that a general trade depression has set in, secondly the Congress Ministries, particularly the one in Bombay have imposed taxations in order to further their prohibition and other schemes, which handicap the industry in its competition against Foreign imports, and thirdly the Central Government's legislation in fulfilment of the Indo-British Trade Pact and the New Duty on Raw Cotton have raised the danger of severe competition from Lancashire. In view of these new factors, Trade Depression, Provincial and Central legislations, the employers are compelled to cut down wages and preserve the industry.

It is thus plain that the employer's grievance is not only against the anti-national acts of the British Government, but is as much against the social legislation—undertaken by the Congress

Government in fulfilment of their programme and election pledges. The Bombay Government, for example, imposed a tax on the landlords of Bombay and Ahmedabad to meet costs of prohibition. The mill owners of both the cities are making common cause with the landlords and liquor traders against this tax, and consequently against prohibition, and demand its removal or threaten wage-cuts. The exploiters will not allow the Congress to undertake legislative measures for the masses at the cost of their profits.

In the matter of provincial legislation, the employers' grievances is directed not only against measures already undertaken, but against measures that are foreshadowed and promised in the programme and principles of the Congress Governments. This is a very important aspect of the mill-owners' drive against further legislation. In this we may again refer to the case of the Bombay Ministry and its Inquiry Committee. Like all Congress Ministries, Government had promised social legislation for the working-class in the matter of leave with pay, sick leave, unemployment benefit, and minimum living wage. If these were not to remain merely election promises, it was natural that a part of their costs was bound to come from the employer's. While the Committee was inquiring into the possibility of wage increases, the employers asked it to take into consideration the fact that the Congress Government were pledged to impose a further burden on the industry by way of social insurance legislation and hence wanted the Committee to have the matter referred to the Government. The Government as far back as December 1937 declared that within six months or so they would be taking up schemes of sick leave and holidays with pay. The Inquiry Committee, therefore, while recommending wage-increase did not do it to the fullest extent justified, but left over sufficient margin to the employers, from the profits already accrued to them, to provide for the foreshadowed legislation. Just as the Bombay recommendations were followed in other provinces, these promises of social legislation were also copied. Therefore, so soon as the Congress Governments seriously began to take up social legislation, whether in the matter of workers or kisans, the employers began an all-India offensive against any amelioration being given to the exploited masses at the cost of the exploiters.

It is significant to note that this campaign against social legislation long preceded the Acts of the Central Government, long before the Indo-British Trade Pact and the Cotton Duty came into existence. It is also significant to note that the employers so far have made no proposals to raise any serious opposition to the Central Government. But they have been very vehement and aggressive against Provincial Legislation for the masses. Their first reaction to the attack of the British Government has not been one of direct opposition to the British Government, but one of opposition to the masses of the country, one of attacking the living of the masses. This clearly points out that the employers' campaign against social legislation, against wage-increases, is not motivated by purely economic considerations, but has its political aspect also. In short, the employers all over India, especially the big vested interests, will not tolerate the strengthening of the masses at the hands of the ministries that have come to power on the strength of the masses, and will not tolerate the organized strength of the working class to grow.

This conclusion is supported when we examine the economics of the employers' case and find that it does not vindicate their position. On the admission of their own representatives, like the Chamber of Commerce, the new burdens imposed on the industry amount to taking away 14 per cent from its protective armour, of which provincial legislation and wage increases amount to only 5 per cent, while the balance of 9 per cent is taken away by the Acts of the Central Government. A set of employers that were not determined to smash the working masses and the Congress Government would have first come forward with proposals to fight the major burden imposed by a foreign anti-national government. Instead, the employers have rushed in the first instance to cut the wages of the unprotected exploited masses, to demand abrogation of the property taxes and

prohibition and to compel the Government not to undertake further ameliorative measures, already promised. They would rather fight the masses and the nation for the 5 per cent burden than fight the foreign enemy for the 9 per cent burden. Hence we maintain that the employers all over India have an anti-national political motive behind their proposals which seem to be ostensibly mitigated by pure economic considerations.

This is further supported when we examine and find that the Trade Depression is not of the depth it is alleged to be and the provincial measures and wage-increase have not cut at the normal profits of the industry. We would again draw attention to the Report of the Bombay Committee that the wage increases that they gave, came purely from the extra profits and left the normal trading profits untouched. The employers allege that these extra profits, arising from low cotton price and a higher cloth price, have been destroyed by the fall in cloth prices, since the Committee reported, and that the cotton duty raises the price of foreign cotton, that the depression is severe is indicated by accumulating stocks. Without going into details we may point out that just when conditions were arising where the extra advantage arising from disparity between cotton and cloth prices was being diminished by the fall of the latter, the subsidy proposals of the United States Government to their Loan Cotton, pulled cotton prices still further down and to a certain extent helped to retain the former extra advantage. The accumulation of stocks is partly seasonal and every year summer shows more or less full godown as a normal feature, unless very extraordinary boom conditions prevail.

It may be argued that while the extra profits and advantages have been entrenched upon by the wage-increases and provincial legislation, the normal trade itself is now being hampered and ordinary profits also cut into by the 5 per cent lowering of protection and consequent relief to Lancashire. While, we certainly condemn the Pact and the gift to foreign capital we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the crisis in England itself has forced the employers there to give concessions to British Textile workers, which in their turn restore the protection to the industry here in an indirect manner. The British Textile workers only recently secured the minimum wage-law and holidays with pay from the Government. This has forced the cotton employers there to raise weaving price by 8 per cent. While we have not been, able to gauge the full effects of this, we certainly can say that it indicates an indirect relief from the effects of the reduced protection, in that the cost of production of Lancashire cloth has risen to some extent as a result of the above social legislation. Our employers surely have not missed to read the Customs Report of the Federated Malaya States, which shows that the severe boycott of Japanese Cloth, by Chinese merchants in the FM States has expanded the market there for Indian cloth not for Lancashire. We may say that the picture of an industry sinking in depression is over-painted and the economics of the case do not justify wage-cuts.

The representations of the employers, though they have, not received sanction from the Government for a direct wage-cut, have produced one result, which is disastrous to the masses. The determined opposition that they have given to any move of the ministries to support the demands of the masses for the last two years have successfully stopped the promised social legislation (for minimum wage, unemployment benefits and sick leave) taking any concrete shape. The employers have succeeded in ending the period of conceding relief to the masses. They have succeeded in preventing legislation for recognition of trade unions for collective bargaining, for security of services. They have stood against the rising tide of mass strength.

Having succeeded so far they are now demanding a positive offensive against the working class, and not only prevent its further gains but take away the gains already achieved.

It may be asked however, that since the Government have not upheld the demands of the employers, and since the employers have not taken any steps to realize their demand independently,

since the employers in Bombay or elsewhere have not declared a general cut, where is the necessity of raising a scare about it or the necessity for Congress and the Government to intervene? In answer we submit that we are not posing the issues for merely an academic argument or to meet a supposed danger. The employers are already partially successful in enlisting the sympathy of the Government in their endeavour and the Congress Government of this province, instead of intervening on behalf of labour, is falling a victim to the ideas of Law and Order against labour. The employers' attack is not merely confined to Bombay but is receiving an all-India support. The employers had never taken kindly the enforcement of a wage-increase. Therefore, immediately after the sanctions of the wage-increases, they took steps to reduce their wage-bill by an indirect method. The strength of workers per thousand spindles and per hundred looms was reduced and work intensified. Schemes of rationalization were introduced which swelled the ranks of the unemployed and reduced the total income of the working class. The fact that Inquiry Committees of Government were discussing the problem of rationalization, the problem intensified labour and unemployment arising from rationalization, was altogether neglected. The fact that a Committee was sitting to devise an equitable basis of wage-rates was ignored and new weaving rates were introduced, bringing about savings in the wages-bill.

In Chalisgaon when workers resisted rationalization, the Congress leadership—in spite of all our efforts at conciliation—failed to stand by the workers unequivocally and the Congress Government connived at the owners' violation of an agreement, which was reached through the mediation of the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee. As a result the workers after repeated and long resistance were defeated. In Barsi, one employer most blatantly imposed a wage-cut of 20 per cent only recently. During the course of investigation before the Inquiry Committee it was found that one employer had refused to carry out Government's recommendation of last year to give wage-increase and yet he was never exposed before public opinion, or and Government taken any steps to denounce the fact to the public.

Emboldened by these examples, the employers in Bombay and Ahmedabad have now made proposals of wage-cuts all round. Serious preparations are afoot for a lock-out or enforce short working hours in the whole industry. It appears that in many quarters an idea is entertained that the disaster of a lock-out can be averted by permitting shorter working hours. But it is plain in the face of it that shorter hours mean shorter earnings and thus are bound to act as a disastrous wage-cut in an indirect way. In order to test the attitude of the Government, of the public and the workers, individual employers are putting out feelers, as in the case of the Phoenix Mill in Bombay where the mill owner, in spite of the fact that his last year's working showed a profit of Rs138,817, locked out the mill indefinitely in April, alleging severe trade depression. Thus our calling for your immediate intervention is not based on mere scare but on concrete instances of mill owners' attacks as part of the impending general attack.

The attitude taken up by the Ministry in the case of Phoenix Mill has been most revealing to us and we wonder if it is to be taken as a new change in Government's policy towards labour. When the employer over the head of the mass of his old workers, wanted to rush in 200 men under the cloak of maintaining safety service for the machinery, the workers, especially one thousand women, resisted the attempt on the ground that before any safety service to the mill could be given, assurance of safety and security of their services must be given by the employer. When we represented matters to the Ministry and asked for the assurance, the Home Minister maintained that Government was concerned only with maintenance of Law and Order and was bound to supply police protection when asked for by the employers; as for the security of service of 4,000 workers it was a matter to be negotiated between the employer and the workers. But what were

the workers to do when in the absence of collective bargaining and trade union recognition the employer refused to negotiate? The Congress Ministry refuse to intervene or answer the question.

In an unequal struggle between the exploited workers and the mighty vested interests the workers expect the Congress Ministry to unequivocally stand by them and protect their interests. But more and more we find that under the onslaught of the employer, our Ministries have not only ceased to make progress in favour of the workers but have taken to the road of assisting the employers in their struggle against the workers.

It has, therefore, become imperative that we call the attention of the Congress organization and ask its intervention on the side of labour. It has become imperative that our ministers cease treating workers' struggles as a problem for Law and Order Department, as a Police Problem.

There is still another reason why Congress and its Governments should intervene on the side of labour and not allow the crisis to be treated as a dispute to be settled between the employers and the employed. The textile industry here has been assisted in its growth to a very great extent by the national movement. It was the Boycott movement that saved the industry from the ruinous effects of the last world depression, and the boycott movement was a creation of the masses and the Congress. The industry cannot be allowed to treat its affairs as one of private economic enterprise, wherein others have no right to intervene.

It has at the same time to be remembered that the industry, while utilizing the national movement for its gains, has never voluntarily surrendered a part of its profits to the working-masses, who had always to struggle whether it be for increases or against cuts. Therefore the interests of the working-masses must receive the first protection at the hands of the Congress and Government.

While recognizing that the textile industry should be protected against the attack of foreign capital, we maintain that it must not be done at the cost of the working-masses, by imposing wage-cuts, rationalization, shorter hours or holding up ameliorative legislation. Particularly today the industry is not in such a position that it is forced to take the drastic anti-national step of a wage-cut. If it is allowed to do that, it is the surest way to drive a wedge between the Congress Ministries and Labour, to provoke labour to resistance, to provoke the Congress Home Member to attack labour, to disrupt the popular forces, and ultimately behead the national movement itself. The all-India offensive of the employers is dominated more by unpolitical considerations of the reactionary block and vested interests than by urgent and serious economic necessity. In the face of it the Congress and the Government must remain firm and not only resist the attack on the working class but proceed unflinchingly with its schemes—social legislation for minimum living wage, sick leave, holidays with pay and Trade Union recognition. That is the road to strengthen the masses and the national struggle.

At the same time we urge that definite steps be taken to challenge the imperialist attack of Cotton Duty and Trade Pact. For that the most potent and powerful weapon of national boycott of foreign goods must be out of the armoury. The working class is ever ready to play its role in the railways, the docks, the markets and the whole nation to defeat the game of Imperialism. National boycott today is enough to remove whatever handicap is imposed on the industry by the two Acts of the Central Government. That will rally the nation in a wide struggle and it will stop all talk of attack on the working-masses. No wage cuts, no short work, no rationalization against the working class, but a powerful national boycott against the foreign enemy and for the national industry and for further gains to the masses and the national struggle—that we submit should be the only line for the Congress and the Congress Ministries.

We hope the President and the Working Committee will adopt this line. But if our appeal goes unheeded, if the employers' offensive continues unabated, if the Congress Ministries shelter the

employers instead of helping the workers, the working class will be left with no other alternative but resist on a nation-wide scale by means of a general strike. Because of the fact that the employers were moving rapidly and there was no near prospect of securing your intervention, slogan of preparing for a general strike we have already given to resist wage-cuts and lock-outs. But we hope the workers will be saved of this sacrifice, if the whole nation rallies at your behest in their defence and against the anti-national vested interests and the attack of the Government.

We are enclosing for your information herewith the momentous resolution adopted by the textile workers in Bombay City, supported by the workers of Khandesh, Cawnpore, Sholapur and other centres.

57. Madras: Press Workers Strike, by S.V. Ghate¹

National Front, 3 September 1939.

The *Indian Express* Press employs about 120 workers. From this press a kind of a radical English Daily, a Telugu Daily and a Tamil nationalist daily are issued. Although the paper represents a sort of a radical policy, this is also so, because of a certain degree of competitive atmosphere created by other papers of the city. The Tamil Daily has as its Editor, one who has engaged endlessly in the most vicious and violent anti-Socialist and anti-Left Wing propaganda. Passages that are worthy of the most scurrilous rags are no uncommon feature of its notes and features.

Workers Grievances

This Press has been employing workers under the most atrocious conditions. Cycle-boys have not only to provide themselves with cycles, but even deposit a sum with the Management. Deductions from wages on account of fines, etc., are done in the form of recoveries of 'advance'. No regular leave rules exist. The over-time work is never properly paid, and the delivery boys and binders have to work over thirteen hours a day.

The Madras Press Labour Union, which has conducted struggles against the most obstinate and powerful employers, naturally gathered round it the workers, who felt the greatest resentment against the management. The management, on its part took alarm, tried to form its own Union and thus prevent the workers from falling a 'prey' to the militants. Prominent workers were warned, and the most prominent amongst them singled out for dismissal, in the most arbitrary fashion. Yet the militant workers gathered strength and the management stated professed willingness to negotiate, but kept none of its promises. It refused to take back the dismissed workers and while the Union for its part agreed to arbitration, intensified the offensive by suspending three more men. In spite of an understanding reached in the presence of the Minister of Industries and Labour, the workers were not taken back.

Strike

The workers under the circumstances took the only step that was open to them and on the 21st of June the strike started. It was a heroic day in the annals of the Madras Press Labour Union; for, the workers had shown that they can concentrate and be conscious of their own demands, even where there is a cloud of 'nationalism that covers a multitude of sins'.

Com. A.S.K. Iyengar was on the spot, watching the picketing. Thirty-nine heroic workers were arrested on that day and police terrorism reached a high pitch, which has been kept up to this day. The Editor of *Dhinamani* and the owner of the press, personally superintended the dragging in of the black-legs over the bodies of the heroic pickets.

In the afternoon hundreds of workers from all other presses came in a big procession, shouting militant slogans. The climax was reached in the evening when Com. Iyengar was arrested under that most monstrous law of British Imperialism, viz., under Sec. 109 LPC and other provisions.

The solid stand of the militant workers and spontaneous response from other workers galvanized the enthusiasm of the workers and on the second day several more workers were arrested; and after the first onrush, the number of workers that picketed slowly grew less. The ranks of the fighters were depleted on account of the arrests. More than seventy workers were arrested and summarily sentenced. The processes of law are certainly conveniently expedited under certain conditions.

There was an attempt at negotiation with the management, but it failed as the management wanted the question of whether to continue to engage the black-legs for a period of one year because of contract, to be referred to the arbitrator. This meant the victimization of 28 more strikers, and therefore the Union refused to submit to such an arbitration.

Heroism against Odds

On the sixth day of strike Com. B.S. Rao, the Secretary of the Madras District Congress Socialist Party and member, AICC led the picketing and was arrested. The local press refused to give any publicity to this strike news.

The Ministry, on the other hand, actively supported the management by condoning the breaches of the Factory Act; (it is understood that they actually exempted the Press from the operation of the Factory Act for a period of two months!) while the police did their part of the job in the usual manner.

Meanwhile the *Dhinamani*, *Indian Express* and *Andhra Prabha* came out as usual, with the aid of black-legs, and after a full month, when over 85 had been sent to jail the strike started on its downward course. The management refused to come to terms, and finally, the strike was called off on the 28th of July exactly after a month.

The strike has its lessons. The sacrificing of over 60 people for picketing seriously affected the continuance of the strike, as there were not enough strikers to keep watch at the Press gate. The other press workers, who were taking keen interest in the strike, were banned from even entering the street, and the few, who managed to go near the press, were put under arrest for 'picketing'. The police repression and the attitude of the Government, which did not want the 'Socialists' to win the strike was greatly responsible for the final collapse of the strike. Meanwhile, the *Dhinamani* carried on a slanderous campaign against the Socialists, day after day, in the filthiest manner.

This has not so far affected the position of the Union, as workers have understood that repression was primarily responsible for the failure of the strike.

¹S.V. Ghate (1896–1970); one of the founders of CPI and its first General Secretary, 1925; one of the chief organizers of the famous textile workers' strike in Bombay in 1927, and also one of those who founded the Girni Kamgar Union in 1928; arrested in connection with Meerut Conspiracy Case, 1929 and released, 1933; imprisoned, 1940–44; and 1948–50; member, Central Committee CPI, 1943–50; Treasurer CPI, 1953; elected to Central Control Commission, CPI, 1956.

58. Kushtia (Bengal): Workers at Grips with the Enemy, Bhowani Sen *National Front*, 3 September 1939.

Three thousand workers of the Kushtia Mohini Mills (textile) are on strike since the 4th of August. The Company has issued a notice to abolish the 'C' shift. If the measure is carried out, at least

1000 workers will be thrown out of employment without any provision for their livelihood. In order to resist this offensive of the owners, the workers have resorted to strike. The authorities, instead of responding to the workers' demand, have declared a lock-out.

The Kushtia Mohini Mills have an authorized capital of Rs 15,00,000 and give employment to 3000 workers. They have above 1900 spindles and 556 looms. The average monthly pay of workers is about Rs 16 per month on a piece-rate basis.

Systematic Offensive of the Company

At a single stroke of the pen the Company intends to appropriate from 1000 workers about 2 lacs of Rupees per annum by abolishing the 'C' shift and thus throwing the workers on the streets. The management argues that there is a glut in the market, stocks cannot be cleared and, therefore, output must be restricted. But between 1930 to 1938 the most prosperous years for the Indian Cotton textile industry, the millowners have made enormous profits without granting any concession to the workers. On the other hand, since 1930, there has been a wage cut twice in the Kushtia Mohini Mills. The average earning of a weaver has been reduced from Rs 40 per month in 1930 to Rs 20 per month at present, i.e., by 50 per cent in the course of the last 8 years. During the same period the earnings of the workers in the folding department have been reduced from Rs 30 per month to Rs 25. In this way, there has been all round reduction in the wages in course of the last few years, a period during which the industry enjoyed enjoyable prosperity. Now the company proposes to take the most drastic offensive to shift the burden of the Indo-British Trade Pact on to the shoulders of the starving workers.

Workers Take up the Challenge

The workers have refused to retreat before the offensive, instead, they have lined up in complete unanimity behind the Kushtia Textile Workers' Union in order to beat back the aggression of the capitalists. The strike is so complete that even the day-labourers working under contractors to carry materials from outside have rallied round the strikers. The Union, enjoying the confidence of all workers, is leading the strike in perfect peace and discipline. Out of the 3000 workers of the mills 2300 are enrolled members of the Union. The Union was first established in the year 1936 and under the banner of the Union the workers fought heroic battles in the past. In 1937 after a 3 months strike from February to April the Kushtia Textile Workers Union compelled the owners to concede the demands of the workers. During this strike the entire town population rallied round the workers and in protest against the repressive methods and police persecution the town observed a one day's complete hartal. During the second strike struggle in the month of September in the same year the company resorted to the nefarious tactic of dividing the workers by setting up a rival company union. It was at this time that comrade Zamiruddin was murdered. He was a militant worker and enthusiastic organizer of the Textile Workers Union. On that occasion a number of other workers were severely assaulted. But the Union emerged successfully from the crisis, the rival union was dead after a short period of criminal existence. The growing strength of the union has built up the solid unity of the workers. That is how 3000 workers of all departments and communities have been able to force the mill authorities to close the factory.

Volunteer Corps

Out of these struggles a brilliant band of fighters have set up the *Zamiruddin Fauj*, a workers' volunteer corps, named after the martyr Com. Zamiruddin. This volunteer corps acts as the shock brigade of the working people and the peasantry. It defends the workers' strike struggles by picketing against black-legging; it carries the influence of the organized textile workers among the city poor,

wakes them up into militant consciousness and goes into the villages to assist the peasants in their day today struggle against oppression and exploitation. The Kushtia Town Congress Committee has agreed to the proposal of the Zamiruddin Fauj to organize a national militia with the Fauj's assistance. In the present strike, the Fauj is guarding the mill gates day and night to prevent the entry of Dalals inside the mill.

Workers Assert Their Political Leadership

Under the political leadership of the Communists the consciousness of the Kushtia Mohini Mills workers has been raised above the level of the economic craft mentality. The advanced fighters amongst them are also the most enthusiastic organizers of the Town Congress Committee whose membership is composed largely of the working class population. Under their initiative the day labourers of the town have been organized into a 'Din Mazdoor Union'. They have inspired confidence in the minds of the poor. The Bidi workers who have been organized into a strong mass union, have lined up on the model of their advanced class brethren the textile workers and fought some successful battles only a month ago. The organizational influence of the town proletariat has roused the peasants and organized them into mass Kisan Samities and brought them under the banner of the Congress. They have eradicated communalism from the city and reduced the Muslim League into a non-entity. Under the pressure of the militant struggle of the organized textile workers, Congressmen and Krishak Proja leaders are working in close co-operation inside the Textile Workers Union and siding with the workers to win their class battles. Workers' victory in the present strike means much more than some economic advantage to the workers themselves, it will provide a fillip to the organized struggle of the entire mass of poor people in the town and villages around it.

A Part of All-India Struggle

The strike in the Kushtia Mohini Mills is not a partial localized fight. It is a part of the coming general struggle of the All-India Textile workers just as the offensive of the Management of the Mohini Mills is a part of the general plan for an All-India offensive of the Textile millowners. From Bombay, Ahmedabad and Cawnpore come reports of threats of wage-cuts and dismissals and the Textile workers everywhere are determined to resist and beat back the offensive. One month ago the All-India Textile Workers Conference at Nagpur (24th July '39) reviewed the situation and issued a call for organized preparation for the coming struggle. Thousands of textile workers are going to become unemployed without any provision for their livelihood. Those who are employed are threatened with direct or indirect wage-cuts. There is a similar crisis in the Bengal Jute Industry in which hundreds of thousands of workers are preparing for struggle against forced unemployment and reduction of earnings. A huge Jute workers rally at Calcutta resolved to prepare for a general strike. The All-India Railwaymen's Federation has similarly issued a call to the several lacs of Railway workers to be organized for a struggle to secure their minimum demands, if necessary, by resorting to general strike. 21st August was celebrated as an All India Day by Railwaymen. Finally, the Kushtia Mohini Mills strike has begun at a time when the 14 lacs of workers are on the eve of launching a major struggle and another satyagraha movement is taking shape for the release of Political Prisoners. Thus we are on the eve of a first class political crisis alongside a country-wide mass struggle.

Let the victory of the Textile Workers strike in the Kushtia Mohini Mills strengthen the grounds for the coming general struggle. The entire public must mobilize its support to beat back the attack of the millowners against workers' bread and employment.

59. Railway Workers' Fight—A Fight of the Entire Nation

Article by Bhowani Sen, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 4, September 1939.

September 1939

Railway workers are on the eve of a major struggle. After years of passivity and slothful slumber, organized railway labour has issued a call for action. The All-India Railway men's Federation, in a note of warning to the Railway Board, has declared that railway workers will resort to a general strike, unless their minimum demands are fulfilled. These demands are fulfilled. These demands include revision of scales of pay, provident fund, benefit for low paid staff and better conditions of work. Any major clash in the transport world is bound to affect the entire people. The workers cannot fight the battle alone, nor is it a sectional fight of the Railway workers. In order to understand that this fight is a fight of the entire nation, that the responsibility of the impending crisis rests not upon the railway worker, but upon the Railway Board, the people must be acquainted with some salient facts, how finance capital squeezes the Indian people through the operation of Indian Railways, how our railway system acts as a State Capitalist Trust, as a Super Boss to determine the fate of our industry and in the interests of a section of British Capitalists. It is to the interest of this coupon-clipping Leisure class that workers' bones are crushed in the railway.

An analysis of the financial results of the working of all State Railways in India for the year 1937–39 will reveal the nature and extent of the exploitation. Total revenue receipts for the year amounted to Rs 101.69 crore and total revenue expenditure to Rs 98.93 crore thus leaving a profit of Rs 2.76 crore, after deductions for Depreciation and Reserve Fund and permanent interest charges for the annuity holders. On the income side about 49 per cent of the revenue comes from freight charges on merchandise and is borne by the traders, industrialists and the peasants. About 28 per cent of the income comes from travelling passengers; thus 77 per cent of all income on the Railways is directly contributed by the general public irrespective of classes and communities. Where does this money go and for whose benefit?

29 per cent of the total expenditure is earmarked for Interest charges that go into the pockets of British Capitalists who invested the original capital under a system of guaranteed profit from the Government of India. The merchant adventurers' loots of the Company Days were reinvested in transport to consolidate and strengthen the British rule for which the public exchequer guaranteed profit. Now the State has purchased the lines and they get interests year after year. The amount comes to about 30 crores per annum. Thus every year, every Indian, adult or minor, has to pay about 12 *annas* on the average to fill up the pockets of the absentee Railway owners.

The Railway system is used as a weapon to crush Indian industries and to act as a vehicle to bring British goods into the Indian Market on a premium. The Railway Boards' Freight policy is solely directed to this end. Goods are classified and rated in much a way that imports of manufactures are put on a more favourable position. This rate policy is supplemented by Government of India's taxation policy under the pretext of saving Railway Finance. Bengal coal fields cannot compete with South African coal import because of the export bounty enjoyed by the latter from the South African Railways. Similar advantage is denied to Bengal Coal by the Indian Railways. Besides, the Indian collieries have borne the burden of Surcharge on coal freight for the sake of financing Railways. A Surcharge of 15 per cent was levied in 1932, the rate was reduced to 12 ½ per cent in 1935. Since then, the Coal mining interests have continuously been pressing for its removal, but it has been maintained on the ground of meeting the exigencies of Railway finance. The burden of this tax falls not only on the collieries but on the entire Indian Industry—the greatest consumer of coal. The bluff of the exigencies of Railway finance was visibly exposed when in 1937, the Railways

put forward a proposal for a revised scale incorporating the Surcharge, though there were definite indications of improvement in Railway Revenues.

About 7 lakh employees work in the Railways. The annual cost for the staff is only Rs 35 crore. It includes the large salaries of the high officials. A large majority of the workers are extremely low paid. The annual pay Bill of these 7 lakh employees hardly exceeds the annual interest paid to the owners of capital. 65 per cent of these employees do not get Provident Fund Benefit. They are the lowest paid section of Railway servants and get below the living wage. For them there is no regulation of hours of work. Since 1931, new scales of pay have been introduced by reducing wages and salaries. During the period of economic crisis, the most cruel and intolerable cuts and retrenchments were enforced upon the workers. In five years from 1931–32 to 1935–36 Rs 4.57 crore were saved by emergency deductions from workers’ wages. That is, seven lakh workers had to part with Rs 90 lakh every year in the name of saving the Railways. It means, Rupees Thirteen per head per annum had to be paid by the workers to the Railway Authorities, when their own income is below the level of a decent standard of life.

But the Economic History of Indian Railways for the last fourteen years belies the bogy of financial stringency of a nature that may justify the cuts. From 1924–25 to 1937–38 the State received large profits from 7 Railways as follows:

EI Railway	Rs 21 ¾ crores
BBCI Railway	Rs 20 ½ crores
South Indian Railway	Rs 6 ¼ crores
Bengal & NW Railway	Rs 6 ½ crores
Madras & South Marhatta Railway	Rs 6 crores
North Western (Commercial) Railway	Rs 2 ¾ crores
Lucknow–Bareilly	Rs 1 crore
Total	Rs 63 ¾ crores

During the same period, the state had to bear losses from five railways as follows:

NW Strategic Section	Rs 26 ¼ crores
BN Railway	Rs 17 ¼ crores
AB Railway	Rs 6 crores
EB Railway	Rs 5 ¾ crores
GIP Railway	Rs 1 1/3 crores
Total	Rs 56–7/12 crores

Deducting losses from gains, we get that the State has secured a net profit of Rs 7 crore in the course of 14 years. The period includes the most prosperous as well as the most critical times for the Railways.

Thus, after providing for depreciation funds and interest charges for the owners of capital, the State has secured a net profit at Rs 50 lakhs per annum for fourteen years, whereas from 1931 workers had to sacrifice Rs 90 lakhs per annum to make the Railways pass over economic crisis.

The real gains of the Imperialist State are even greater than those indicated above. The major part of the loss occurred in the Strategic Railways of NWF. This loss amounted to Rs 26½ crores in the course of fourteen years. These Railways have no utility whatsoever in India’s economic life. They are maintained at a financial loss year after year solely on ‘strategic reasons’, that is for strengthening the Imperial military positions for enslaving the frontier tribes, and for guarding the outposts of the Empire. Every rupee of their costs may rightfully be charged against the British Exchequer.

Finance Capital is, therefore, squeezing India through the Railways. They act as a weapon of competition against Indian industry, they act as a means to mobilize Imperial military forces at the cost of the Indian people, they act as a means to drain vast sums of money and fill up the money bags of British Capitalists. The Railway Board is the High Command of these Railways. Under the new Constitution, the Railway Board will be absolutely free from legislative control, the Legislatures shall have no right to discuss Railway Finance. In every free country of the world, the Railway system acts as a vital economic power of the nation but in India it has always been and is further going to be a mighty weapon of Imperialist Autocracy. Let the Railway workers rise up tomorrow and challenge the might of the Autocracy. Let the people stand by the Workers, baffle the cruel attacks of the Railway Boards and vindicate justice. This fight is a fight of the entire nation.

60. On Socialist–Communist Unity: P.C. Joshi to Jayaprakash Narayan,
5 September 1939

Jayaprakash Narayan Papers, File No. 2, NMML.

Dear J.P.

Yours of 10/8. I have been waiting in vain for the promised telegram and the letter 'after LCC' And then I had to wait for Ajay to come back.

I am afraid I cannot make anything out of your letter except that in that 'sleepy hollow', and isolated as you are losing your sense of proportion.

You are idealizing partial struggles, bewailing lack of working class organization when political events are taking place which smother partial struggles for ever, which would smash whatever of working class organization exists.

You need not stress the role of partial struggles to us, we have become what we are, on the basis of partial struggles, nor the need to organize the working class. Whatever our sins and they are plenty, we have clung to the working class not from today but from our very birth. Who would say we have not done our best? Membership of GKU stands at least 20 thousand today. Mazdoor Sabha is unbroken despite daily victimization for over a year and provocations which have increased and not abated, and so on.

What we are being made conscious of is not to sink ourselves in local partial struggles but the need to broaden them from economics to politics, from local to national. Campaign politics at which you are sneering is the most effective way of achieving this as a transitional measure. Of course to talk of campaigns, a cry not to get the *masses* into them except our usual following, is to make a laughing stock of ourselves and let others say that we celebrate Days only to advertise our self importance. It is only when we grasp the political necessity for an organizational step that we will be able to check its distortion and abuse.

What events are teaching us is not the necessity to organize the TUs but how to overcome the lag in organization, how to rapidly organize the unorganized for immediate struggles, how to transform existing TUs into mass unions which means how to unite the vanguard (socialist), how to increase the political/ideological competence of this vanguard so that it may batter down all organizational obstacles. It is the organizational needs of the working class and our national movement which makes us eager for Socialist–Communist Unity.

But what do we find? You comrades do not even seem to care for joint work:

After Bombay Bharadwaj goes to Lucknow. Narendra Deoji keeps mum.

J.P. fixes up Bharadwaj for the Bihar School. We make this possible for him by postponing others of his very important tasks. Don't know what happens to J.P., he does not even inform him whether there will be a school or not, whether he is wanted or not.

The LCC is to meet at Calcutta. Dates are a mess. We send Ajay and Bharadwaj. Bharadwaj has to leave Calcutta (because of dates). Ajay sees J.P. for a while and then he comes to Calcutta just when LCC is to meet, no prior consultations, nothing. J.P. then suddenly leaves Calcutta without doing his own job with his own Comrades. They are going Left Nationalist and all that. J.P. got to say that he will disaffiliate them. It is your job as a Party leader to educate them do your very best to win them over. Ajay has to do his own job and also yours and stay on for 2 weeks more. This means a mess of his own work here. What would you call this? I don't know whether it arises from your methods of working or is it your line. Perhaps it is wrong to divide the two. The result is you can sulk in one corner against Leftism and we can bewail in another. Meanwhile events take place that would reduce us to pulp. And we are supposed to shape events.

We are perhaps damned too puny and self-centred. Instead of riding the waves we are not even swimming together. You tell my letter about 9 July 'disappointing' but don't tell me how, I am thus helpless—neither do I see my mistake nor yours.

The 'Forward Bloc' is being studied by us. We have already launched a campaign of ideological demarcation from Left nationalism and will continue our efforts in our press. You will be glad to know that after Ajay's educational campaigns our ranks in Bengal stand united—not one dissident either at the top or in the ranks. This gives us faith and confidence. But how much can we by ourselves do? It is this which makes us to come to you.

Again about Congress Unity. You say that 'we are thinking in no less narrow terms than they'. You don't quote chapter and verse. You don't argue. What can I answer? I can only state as fervently as I can that the unity of the Congress is our first consideration because the struggle against Imperialism is our main aim. I believe you will concede that we are not sitting idle, spinning phrases and feeling warm that non-resistance to Right disruption will preserve the unity of the Congress that will lead to capitulation before Imperialism, for the disruptive policy of the Right is the organizational counter-part to their political policy of compromise. From drift they are passing over to disruption for objective events won't let them drift. The nearer comes the struggle the sharper becomes the conflict. It is so because we Socialists are unable to unify the forces of struggle, unable to put up a successful resistance to Right disruption, that the masses of Congressmen are confused and demoralized. How can we do this unless we unify ourselves.

But you will say I only write to do propaganda for Socialist unity. This is a fact from wherever one may begin, the only way out visible is this. No other path is left open and this too not for long. Perhaps it is already too late. Events are marching with breathless speed.

You will be glad to learn that our boys have over-subscribed the 5000 NF fighting Fund. This means I am free to leave Bombay for some time. I have to go to Cawnpore as soon as I can, and then hold consultations for all-India action over textiles. I am also physically played out. Do you think it will be any use of my coming to Patna?

By the way I was surprised to see in the papers, Karjee and Jadunandan Sharma as having joined the Forward Bloc. How did that happen?

I hope my letter won't offend you. It has been written in a beastly hurry!

Love



61. Present War is Essentially of Imperialist Character: Resolution Passed by the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress, 15 September 1939
AITUC Papers, File No. 62, 1938-40, Page Nos 25-26, NMML.

A meeting of the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress was held on Friday the 15th September 1939 when the following resolution was passed:

1. (a) The BPTUC expresses its sympathy and solidarity with people of Poland who are the victims of Nazi Germany and who are valiantly and heroically fighting for the protection of their national independence,
- (b) The BPTUC puts on record its conviction that by participating in an imperialist war the working class and toiling masses bring upon themselves untold miseries and privations not for their own cause but entirely for the benefit of their exploiters,
 - (ii) That the present war is essentially of an imperialist character since out of the warring nations while Nazi Germany represents imperialism on the aggressive, Britain and France represent only imperialism on the defensive as amply borne out by their consistent and successive betrayals of the cause of democracy in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain, China and Czechoslovakia;
 - (iii) That this war is not waged by Britain and France to vindicate the principles of freedom and democracy since both of these imperialist nations have ruthlessly crushed underfoot the attempts of their subject countries for the attainment of freedom and democracy;
 - (iv) That this war, therefore, must, in their own interest, be opposed by the Working Classes and the toiling masses of this country.In view of these considerations, the BPTUC appeals to all the anti-imperialist forces in the country including the Indian National Congress, to resist the imposition of war on the people of India, as participation in the war on the part of the Indian people would be only detrimental to their interests and would result in strengthening their chain of bondage.
- (c) The BPTUC calls upon the affiliated unions to do their best to bring about a strike on 2nd October to express their opposition to War.

62. A Labour Meeting at Ambernath

Home Deptt., Special Branch, File No. 927-A, Part III, Maharashtra State Archives.

Ambernath
23 September 1939

Mr D.K. Desai: Comrades, we assembled here to consider the grievances of workers. After the war broke the Government allowed the merchants to increase the rates by 20 per cent. So the workers should demand increase in their wages and if the management fails to redress the grievances you must declare strike and I hope the strike will be (a) success because this time the Government cannot help the employers as the Government is sending the force for war. Therefore, I appeal to you to unite and fight for the just demand.

Mr Martin Dongre: I am speaking to you after a long time. I regret that you are not paying the Union subscription regularly and I request you to make up your mind to pay the subscription which will be useful to your own cause. You need not be afraid of the employers.

Mr S.V. Parulekar: Comrades, last time I told you that there will be war in Europe and my prediction came true. Now the war has broken in Europe... Capitalists and Authorities will come and tell you to help the cause of war. But you should not listen to them. Because during the last war one crore of Indian men died and a number of people are still starving due to injuries etc. Now you should not help to (sic) any war, and this is the best opportunity to fight for your demand. You must try to unite and fight for your own cause. Remember, the workers of Russia fought for their demands during the last war and now they are enjoying the fruits of their fight. I want to tell you that I may not be able to come here for a month or so and also there is every possibility that all the Labour Leaders will be arrested in order to suppress the workers movement. If the arrest takes place do not be disheartened. Think that you are all leaders and fight to get your grievances redressed. The Government has increased the rates by 20 per cent. The Congress Government is not helping the workers but they are very anxious to help the merchants. The match factory has increased the rates of matches by 40 per cent. Formerly they were selling the matches at Re. 1/10 per gross and now at Rs 2/4. So you must get 20 per cent increase in your wages. Match factory authorities may be thinking of giving you some 15 per cent increase in your wages. Labour Officer Deshmukh will come and tell you that the management is pleased to give you 15 per cent extra in your wages and you must accept the same. Comrades, do not listen to him. They have increased the price of matches by 40 per cent and why should they not increase your wages by 20 per cent? You must fight to get 20 per cent. Paranjpe's Government increased the rates of commodities by 20 per cent. But his Government is not kind enough to increase the wages of poor workers. The workers of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Sholapur have decided to go on strike on the 2nd October to protest against the increased rates of commodities and I request you to go on strike on that day and thus fight for your just demand. Whether Parulekar comes here or not, you select your own leader and go on strike to get your wages increased. The other nations are fighting against each other to expand their empire and why should you not fight for your wages? You should not die by fighting for your enemies in this war. You must die by fighting against the capitalists for your wages. Government will come to you and offer you money and clothes in order to get help in this war. Do not help the Government in any way to help the war. Do not accept anything from the Government. You must take this opportunity to fight against your employers to redress your grievances.

63. Strike of Kanpur Textile Workers

Hindustan Times, 2 October 1939.

Kanpur
1 October

A general strike in all textile mills will commence tomorrow at 9 O'clock in the morning. This decision was reached this evening at a public meeting attended by about 20,000 workers, and addressed by Mr Balkrishna Sharma and other labour leaders. Allegations were made that employers were unwilling to take back old workers and to refer the matter of wages to arbitration. The speakers alleged that even if employers could re-take old workers the strike could be avoided as the rest of the things could be left for arbitration. The workers were told that if they did not stand by the side of the Victoria Mill strikers one by one the employers would decimate them by joining in a common cause. Therefore it was essential that intense preparations for the strike were outlined. Tomorrow morning Red Volunteers and labour leaders would picket all strategic points and punctually at 9 O'clock call upon all the textile workers to come out.

The efforts of the Government to bring about a settlement have been unsuccessful so far.

The employers are willing to accept the Government's suggestion for arbitration, provided, firstly, the threat of a general strike is withdrawn; secondly, arbitration is entrusted to a High Court; and thirdly, the terms of reference including the locus stand of the parties to the dispute are decided beforehand. The Employers Association presumes that any arbitration in the UP Government have in view will be subject to the Defence of India Rules.

The Mazdoor Sabha on the other hand is willing to defer the general strike provided the management of the Victoria Mill reinstates, pending arbitration, employees working on July 27 when the strike in the mill commenced.

64. The Kanpur Strike

Hindustan Times, 3 October 1939.

Kanpur
2 October 1939

Over 40,000 workers of the Muir, Swadeshi, Kakomi, J.K. Manufacturers, Atherton–West and Narain Cotton Mills have struck work from 9 O'clock this morning according to the decision of the General Council of the Mazdoor Sabha for a general strike, following the failure to arrive at a settlement with regard to the Victoria Mills dispute.

The strikers, after coming out from the mills, created a menacing situation near the Woollen Mills, which was nicely handled by Mr Emerson, First Class Magistrate, who rushed to the spot on receipt of information. The crowd, which before the arrival of the Magistrate, stood near the Woollen Mills' gates, abused the employers and threatened the loyal workers with dire consequences if they did not join the strike with them. Mr Emerson persuaded the mob to move, which they did.

A similar situation arose near the J.K. Cotton Mills, where the strikers from the Atherton–West Mills came and complained to the authorities that the employers of that mill had closed the gates so as to prevent the workers from coming out. Mr Whitehouse, ASP got the gates opened and asked the workers if they wanted to come out, but they declined. Later on the crowd was dispersed.

Again, at 12 O'clock the situation deteriorated near the Viceroy Mills, where a mob of strikers collected, shouting inciting slogans and sat down, refusing to move unless the workers from the Victoria Mills came out. Mr L.P. Hancox, District Magistrate and Mr E.F.G. Chapman, SP arrived there and ordered the crowd to disperse within ten minutes. A mild lathi charge was made before the Congress leaders, Mr G.G. Jog and Mr Hamid Khan, persuaded the strikers to disperse.

A much worse situation had to be faced near the Elgin Mills, where the strikers defied the warning given by the police to disperse. The authorities, finding the mob unruly, and apprehending a breach of the peace, ordered a lathi charge to disperse the crowd. About 50 arrests have been made so far. The District Magistrate prohibited by promulgating an order under Section 144, CrPC, the shouting of slogans which might lead to incitement to cause a disturbance of public tranquility. An order prohibiting the assembly of more than five persons and the carrying of lethal weapons is already in force in the city. The general strike has so far affected about 10,000 workers out of 40,000. The authorities are vigilant. Previous to the declaration of the strike by a workers' meeting yesterday, the Employers' Association telegraphed to the Government drawing their immediate attention to a false rumour about Pandit Nehru visiting Cawnpore and initiating the general strike and also to the Mazdoor Sabha president's statement that mill wages would be reduced in all the mills in fifteen days and the militant speeches by the workers' leaders on September 29, and requesting the Government to take action under Rule 381 (A) and (C) of the Defence of India Ordinance.

Earlier the District Magistrate had communicated the Government's proposal agreeing to the reference of the Victoria Mill dispute to arbitration by a judicial officer of the standing of a High Court Judge, and also inviting representatives of both the parties to Lucknow on Monday, when the Premier will return from Naini Tal, to discuss the terms of reference, which, the employers stated, should be wider than merely relating to the question of reduction of wages and retaking of old workers.

In marked contrast to the enthusiasm before last year's general strike declaration, little enthusiasm was noticed at last evening's meeting, and the knowledge of Pandit Nehru's disapproval further damped it.

The main hitch between the Sabha and the employer's occurred over the reinstatement of old workers, as the former insisted on the restoration of the status quo before the threat of a general strike could be withdrawn. As late as last night Mr Bal Krishna Sharma addressing a mass meeting stated that if the employers agreed to this proposal, the strike would be called off.

Several mills are working with a full complement of workers, and even after the recess the latter have not come out to join the strikers.

The authorities have taken precautions to see that loyal workers are not subjected to intimidation by the strikers.

The UP Government made all efforts to bring about an understanding between the Employers' Association and the Mazdoor Sabha in connection with the Victoria Mills dispute, but the parties were unable to come to an agreement. The Government conveyed, through the District Magistrate to the Association their desire to refer the Victoria Mill dispute arbitration by a judicial Court Judge.

Both the employers and the Mazdoor Sabha agreed to the suggestion, but the former wanted, as a preliminary measure, the withdrawal of the threat of a general strike and a discussion of the terms of reference, including the locus stand of the parties to the dispute, before referring the matter to arbitration. The Mazdoor Sabha, on the other hand, demanded the reinstatement of workers working in the mill on September 27, before accepting arbitration.

The issues arising out of the dispute in the Victoria Mills, the workers of which have been totally or partially striking since July 27, are whether the wage reduction in the Victoria Mills is justified; secondly, whether the management are justified in not taking back the old workers. The management of the Victoria Mills claim that the rate of wages paid to their workers was higher than that prevailing in other mills, and that owing to trade depression and the over-stocked position and modernization of the mills, retrenchment of men and reduction of wages were necessary.

Earlier the Mazdoor Sabha accepted reference of the dispute to a labour commission, but the employers thought that such an enquiry would not inspire confidence.

The City Congress Committee is supporting the strikers.

The total number of strikers is now estimated at 12,000.

65. Labour Meeting at Kanpur

Speech of Jata Shankar Shukla, Police Deptt., Box No. 80, File No. 211/1939, UP State Archives, Lucknow.

Gwaltoli
4 October 1939

'I have come here today only see your successful strike. I have also visited some labourers' quarters. I have also met labourers. And I have also met principal Mazdoor Sabha workers. I have both been surprised at and pleased with the course of events. I am happy because the workers have

given a reply with one accord to the mighty power by establishing a powerful organization with the purpose of overthrowing the Imperialistic Government, some of whose members have now realized the extent of the power of the united people. The foundation of British Imperialism has been shaken. It is your duty to destroy it and you will ultimately succeed in destroying it.

This mighty organization of the workers and peasants movement will very soon be in a position to destroy them (the British Government) and to establish its own Government. Labour strikes alone cannot destroy them. To make this task successful we will have to work in collaboration with other freedom loving forces. You have given the proof of your unity and cooperation in consequence of which all the mills in Cawnpore are laying idle today. You have demonstrated that the labourers are not weak. You have made up your mind that on no account, you would tolerate the repressions of the Capitalistic Government and by resisting it you would show how great is the labour power. You have demonstrated that despite the fact that Government possesses power and money, the labour organization can challenge the mill owners that they would be destroyed, if they do not give them their rights. Your opponents are amazed at your power. Cawnpore is known as the Soviet of United Provinces. You have established here a Government on the lines of Soviet Russia. One feels surprised when this scene comes before the view. The mill-owners are doing everything to destroy you and to crush you. We must put this Capitalism to an end so that the labourers may heave a sigh of relief. The opponents of the labourers are perhaps under the impression that they would be able to destroy the Labour movement with the help of the Capitalistic Government. But they must remember that the labour movement is so advanced now that even the whole might of the British Government would not be able to crush it. Even the enemies of the Labourers have to admit the force of labour power. It has also transpired that your opponents want to crush the Labour movement now by working up a communal riot, so that the labour demands may remain unfulfilled. Your struggle is a part of a bigger struggle of ours and the aim of this bigger struggle is to free our beloved country from the curse of slavery. The day is not far off when our country will attain complete independence. At the present movement the British Government is in tight corners.

Today the newspapers have made it clear, how the British Government is precariously placed and how dangerous is its condition. Now only one punch is needed to make an end of the British and the Capitalist Government. The number of British colonies has now been greatly reduced. She has no supporter left. British Government will not be able to carry on this war alone. German-Soviet pact has taken the very life out of Britain. A pact between Japan and Russia is also imminent. All the Balkan States are on the side of Germany and Russia. Italy is against Britain from the very beginning. Turkistan (Turkey) has signed a pact with Russia. Except for this slave India, there is no country left now to help Britain. The power of the opponents of the British is very great. Indians have decided not to give any kind of active help to Britain in this war. When no country whatsoever is to give military help to Britain, they, in this war against Germany, will have to eat the humble pie. De Valera, too, has declared that he will not help Britain in any way. Australia and Canada will be swallowed by Japan, if they (dare) send their armies to Europe. From this you will realize that the British Government is sufficiently in tight corners. The imperialist government is now on the brink of the river, it is in the midst of the current and if one were push it with force, the British Government will come to an end. We must avail this opportunity. We will not again commit the mistake of 1914. Now the British Government has become very weak. The number of her supporters has been greatly reduced. Australian army is insignificant. It is on India alone that the British imperialist government can count. But India will give no help as the Indians now have no faith in the British promises. The British are a selfish nation, it is a sin to do any good to her. If the Indians do not help Britain in this war, the British Government will be over for good. It should be the duty of every Indian not to enlist in the army and to dissuade those who have any intention of offering

themselves for enlistment, so that our young men may not be butchers. Lord Zetland who has lost his mental balance, talks of things of two hundred years ago. British statesmanship has considerably declined. Lord Zetland considers Indians to be fools and wants to deceive them by talking of this and that but Indians have now acquired much sense and even an ordinary labourer understands politics and desires to establish in this land a government of peasants and workers by ending the British empire.

Lord Zetland has become so proud, that without realizing the delicacy of the situation, he wants to make a fool of the Indians. But now he must bear in mind that he will be forced out of this state of drunkenness with power. The bureaucracy and other agents of the Government can of course render help but the people of India will not help even with a single shell. The Capitalists, Rajas, Maharajas and Zamindars have offered to help the Government in every way, but I say that these Rajas and Zamindars can offer only their money but cannot help with men as they have no control over the people. None from among the people will either enlist or go to war. This has been demonstrated through this general strike that in spite of the police help and oppressions, the workers can by a front against the Government and the Capitalists. They have shown that the peasants and workers of the country are opposed to this imperialism. (cheers). I openly declare that the Indians have to do away with this British Government and its Empire. Now when the British are fighting a battle of life and death against the Germans, it is the chance for India to gain independence. This is not the time for making compromises, but this is the time for you to consolidate your forces and put an end to this Government. It is open to us to help Government or to refuse to help it. No power can compel us (to do so). To enlist in the army of an *alien* Government and cut the throats of others is against the principles of the Indians. I hope that no Indian, not even if he be unemployed or starving, will ever get himself enlisted in the army. It is my conviction that we should achieve independence by every possible means. I wish the Congress to declare that the Indians should achieve complete independence at any cost. We shall have real power only when a revolution will be brought about to achieve independence. We should have a revolution. To achieve independence is not a joke. Thousands will have to receive bullets, be hanged and fill the Jails. Only then we will achieve independence and only then will we be able to retain independence thus achieved (cheers). We should not accept any half way compromise. We want complete independence, and will rest only when we have achieved it.

Our Swaraj will not be complete unless millions of men are made targets of the bullets; unless bombs are thrown from the aeroplanes; unless our mothers and sisters are rendered orphans; and unless thousands swing on the gibbet. We shall get freedom when the price for freedom shall have been paid and we shall then be able to retain it. We rendered every possible help in the war of 1914 but for all these services we got the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh where thousands of innocent people were made victims of bullets and women outraged. And surely we cannot tolerate these things. Now is the chance to take a revenge. As we were made the victims of the bullets, so let us now make the English people victims of bullets. This is our chance and we must take advantage of it. This capital i.e. the Capitalist Millowners are the pillars of the British Government. If these pillars are demolished the British Government will be powerless. We have to root out these pillars and make them weak. These people are traitors to the country and it is necessary to finish them also. These people flatter the British Government and say that the farmers and labourers are creating disturbances in the country and that is why the Government tyrannizes the farmers and the labourers. They (farmers and labours) are being deprived of their rights and so it is necessary to end these traitors also. Sir J.P. Srivastava is prepared to place his life and wealth at the disposal of the Government, but the people who are the virtual rulers do not want to render any help. The Capitalists have no influence over the people. You saw in the elections how all of them faced a

serious rebuff. I also observe that the officials of Cawnpore are helping the millowner with the result that the Mazdoor Sabha is not allowed to hold meetings; Section 144 CrPC is in force and the members of the Mazdoor Sabha are being arrested and the henchmen of the millowners are openly making a propaganda against the labourers. Efforts are being made to end the hartal but I am sure that your hartal will be successful. If the workers of the Mazdoor Sabha do not get an opportunity to hold meetings how will they be able to control the labourers. The police is openly siding the millowners. The Deputy Superintendent of police held a boy by the neck and strangled him. (Shame, Shame). I cannot understand how did he (Dy Supdt of Police) do it. In spite of the Congress Government, such events are happening and such officers are in existence. I will try that such officers are duly punished so that they may not dare repeat these things again. These officers being our slaves are reared on our bread and they treat the people like this. Now the people cannot tolerate such things. How can such servants remain in service? In the end I will say that if you stick to unity and cooperation and continue your struggle which is a part of the struggle for independence, you will surely be successful and the Capitalists will suffer a defeat' (Cheers).

66. Digboi Strike

AICC Papers, File No. G-35, 1939, NMML.

An Appeal to the Members of the AICC

7 October 1939

Friends,

I know you are too much preoccupied with great international problems and the situation created by the declaration of war by Great Britain. Yet would it be too much to expect you to pause for a while and condescend to have a look at the tragic drama that is being enacted at this very moment at one corner of this slave country under the Congress guided Ministry?

When you are thinking of defending democracy and resisting Fascism, would you also think of the fate of thousands of workers, who have been made so unjustly the first victims of war and force against all canons of justice and basic principles of democracy?

One has to recall the background of the remarkable strike to realize properly the gravity of the situation created by the promulgation of the Oil Ordinance and subsequent measures taken by the local authorities, turning overnight Digboi-Tinsukia area covering about 24 miles a protected area, banning entry of non-residents, refusing permit to many residents, prohibiting any interference in the production of petroleum, meetings, assemblies of more than four persons, wearing of unauthorized uniforms like red shirts of Union volunteers, even disallowing consultation between two workers.... The terms of reference of the Conciliation Board should be clear and unambiguous. The Board should give its award regarding the demands of the strikers on all outstanding matters of dispute including demands of Bungalow servants and contractors' labour and all other labour that have participated in the strike. The very fact that the Company has now agreed to take 100 more men (actually surplus or not) has knocked out the whole basis of the strike from the Company's standpoint, as the Company precipitated the crisis owing to its stubborn and persistent refusal to reinstate about 63 dismissed men and to stop further dismissals.

No victimization and reinstatement of all strikers on the date of resumption cannot be a matter of dispute but an indispensable first condition precedent to any settlement of the strike through the intervention of Conciliation Board.

If, however, it is the intention of the resolution that the Conciliation Board will be appointed to persuade the Company, firstly, to take all strikers back in their previous situations, and then to

proceed to deal with all demands of the strikers, it should be clearly understood that the strike cannot be called off until and unless the Conciliation Board can persuade the Company to reinstate all strikers without any exception on the resuming day. It would be nothing short of a grave injustice to the workers if the Conciliation Board attempts to persuade the workers to call off the strike before that betraying their fellow workers, whatever may be their number. No worker worth his salt will join work leaving behind and betraying a number of workers. This is quite out of question and does not deserve our moment's notice.

We have sent two telegrams to you but no reply has come. We are very anxious to have your views on the matter and hope you would clarify the position taken up by the resolution.

We are also very anxious to know what specific instructions you have given to the Ministry to appoint a Tribunal to enquire into the whole circumstances leading to the firing and into the whitewashing (sic) Magisterial report. We have also continually demanded a searching enquiry into the Police and Military excesses since the strike. As there is also no sub-judice case, there can be no legal bar the appointment of the Tribunal. We would, therefore, beg of you to intimate us what concrete steps the Ministry are likely to adopt according to your instructions to administer little justice and give minimum protection to the strikers in a just and lawful strike against the repressive measures.

Awaiting your early reply.

With greetings and best regards.

Yours fraternally,
Sudhindra Pramanik

67. UP Government and Cawnpore

Editorial, *Leader*, 9 October 1939.

8 October 1939

The Cawnpore Labour Inquiry Committee's report which was signed by Messrs Rudra, Rajendra Prasad and Shiva Rao, none of whom is what is called a capitalist, or holds capitalist views, made certain recommendations regarding the declaration of strikes. 'The procedure in regard to the declaration of strikes', the Committee wrote 'is a matter of considerable importance'. They pointed out that 'the strike weapon is a double-edged sword, and needs to be wielded with the greatest of caution and only in the last resort'. Impartial observers will admit that in the present dispute at Cawnpore the double-edged weapon has not been wielded with caution and in the last resort. After the presentation of their demands to the employers by the workers, the next step should be not a strike but the reference of the dispute to an arbitrator. The workers may think that their demands are perfectly legitimate and that the attitude of the employers is utterly unreasonable. But being an interested party, they cannot take an impartial view of things. That task can be performed by a disinterested party. If the leaders of the Mazdoor Sabha are sure as to the justice of their cause why did they not accept the proposal made by the Employers' Association, regarding the appointment of an arbitrator, namely, that the inquiry should be carried out by a judicial authority of high standing who had no connection whatever with labour matters? The Cawnpore Labour Inquiry Committee also suggested that the decision of the executive committee in favour of a strike should be submitted for ratification to a properly constituted general body of voters of the trade union and that voting on this question both in the committee and the general meeting should not be by show of hands but by the well recognized democratic process of the secret ballot. 'Secrecy of voting', the Inquiry Committee emphasized, 'is fundamental'. This democratic process

was not adopted on the present occasion. 'The Sabha', the Employers' Association points out, 'have called a general strike at the behest of their general council and have not submitted it for ratification to a properly constituted general assembly of their voters by a secret ballot.' There is another feature of the strike which deserves attention. Be strictly non-violent, was the advice conveyed by the leaders of the Mazdoor Sabha in the course of speeches at a meeting of workers held on the eve of the strike. The principle of non-violence is being openly violated by the strikers every day. Describing his experiences of some recent strikes, the Industries Minister of the Central Provinces said the other day that some of the workers were misled to resort to tactics which could not be called peaceful or non-violent. Among the tactics which he condemned was preventing non-strikers from going to work by erecting a human barrier at the gates of the mills. The Minister said that he had no doubt in his mind that gate-blocking in the name of picketing was all wrong and that the Government could not countenance this practice. 'Such activities', he observed, 'are essentially civil disobedience of the Government orders and civil disobedience of the laws of the country and are not calculated to secure to the workers the fulfilment of their objects.' It cannot be unknown to the Industries Minister of the UP Government that at Cawnpore loyal workers were terrorized by strikers and not allowed to go to their work. We are unable to understand why these undesirable activities which were dealt with firmly by Congress Ministries in the Central Provinces, Bombay and Madras are being countenanced at Cawnpore.

Mr Gulzari Lal Nanda, parliamentary secretary to the Bombay Government, who has been closely associated with the trade union movement in that presidency, expressing disapproval of the use of the strike weapon in the settlement of disputes once said that strikes lead to such an amount of loss that even in the case of a successful strike when one examined the losses and gains one would find that the victory is a useless victory and that as a matter of fact successful strikes were rare. Congress leaders tell us that the masses are Congress-minded. If that is so, why did the Congress Ministers not use their influence with the workers to prevent them from resorting to a weapon which would not enable them to attain the object they have in view? Or is it that the Congress Ministers did warn the workers against the dangers of a strike and that their warnings were ignored? In that case too their duty is clear. A British socialist writer drawing attention to the serious consequences of a general strike says that no Government can stand by and watch the machinery of production come to a standstill without taking up the challenge to its authority. We should like to know how the UP Government proposes to meet this challenge.

68. The Rajnandgaon Mill Mazdoor Sangh: R.S. Runiker to Rajendra Prasad, 9 October 1939

AICC Papers, File No. G-35, Part 2, 1939, NMML.

My dear Revered Rajen Babu,

I am putting before you the facts relating to the dispute between the employers and the workers at Rajnandgaon in the Chathisgarh States Agency. I hope you will kindly take the necessary action to safeguard the interest of the workers at Rajnandgaon.

1. Rajnandgaon is a small town in the Nandagaon State in the Chathisgarh States Agency, in the CP and Berar. One Textile Mill is situated in this place which is managed by Messrs Shaw Wallace and Co. of Calcutta.
2. Since the 4th of July 1939, a lock out has been declared in the Mills, and about 3000 Textile workers are out of employment. The condition of the workers has become very critical and grave and they are now faced with utter starvation and penury.

3. The dispute at present relates to the employment of 200 workers (old). The management is adamant on this point and is not prepared to employ all the old workers. Not only this but in the notice dated 29th Sept. 1939, the Mill Management has made it perfectly clear, that it is going to victimize all the leading workers of the Union. The workers are naturally reluctant to accept these terms and therefore resume to join work.
4. The Rajnandgaon Mill Mazdoor Sangh which is conducting the struggle is a Trade Union which has been in existence for the last two years; and is one of the best organized Trade Unions in the country.
5. I strongly feel that the terms which are now being offered to the workers by the Mill Management are very unjust (sic) and smack of vindictiveness. The threat given out by the Mill Management in its notice (dt. 29th September 1939) that it will victimize all those 200 workers who are suspected of as being leaders of the present or past struggles, is most vindictive and unfair and is not likely to be acceptable to the workers.
6. I therefore hope that you will be kind enough to intervene in this dispute and see that all the old workers are taken back on duty and that there is no victimization of the active workers of the Union in any shape or form.
7. I hope you will kindly let me know what action you are pleased to take in this connection, at your early convenience.

Truly,
President,
Rajnandgaon Mill Mazdoor Sangh.

69. Kanpur Again

Editorial, *Leader*, 13 October 1939.

Employers of Kanpur seems to be on the war-path again. They have rejected the offer of the Government Labour Officer to mediate in the dispute that has arisen in the Muir Mills on the discharge of a worker and in the Cawnpore Woollen Mill as a result of a stay-in-strike resorted to by the workers. The Mazdoor Sabha has given a timely warning to the Management of the Muir Mills to re-instate the discharged worker. Failure to do so would lead to a strike involving 4000 workers. The employers in both instances have relied on the report of their own Labour Officer. Their refusal to accept the remediation even of the Government Labour Officer, can only lead to the conclusion and that is that they have not learnt the lesson of the last great battle. Are they spoiling for another in an attempt to defeat the gains that the workers have made as a result of it? The last struggle had created history in the Indian Labour Movement. For the first time the fighting forces of the National Congress and the Working class movement put forth a united effort. We have no doubt that united resistance will be offered, if the employers forsake reason and rely merely on the might of their Capital.

Before the situation assumes a grave turn, however, we hope the UP Government will intervene and curb the intransigence of the employers. We published last week a comment on the death of a British Political agent at the hands of an exerted crowd of the subjects of Rampur State in Orissa.

Since then, there have appeared from some quarters suggestions that the Satyagraha struggles in the Orissa states should be suspended, by way of penance, as it were, for the lapse at Rampur.

While wholeheartedly deploring the incident and recognizing the necessity for guarding against the repetition of such outbreaks, we feel such talk of abandoning the struggles of the States peoples betrays a false perspective and goes far beyond the needs of the situation. In case these

over-zealous guardians of non-violence relying on Gandhiji's example after the Chauri Chaura outbreak, it might not be inapposite to remember that in 1930 Gandhiji himself declared, that now not even a hundred Chauri Chauras would deter him from proceeding with the Civil Disobedience movement.

70. The Cawnpore Affair

Editorial, *Leader*, 13 October 1939.

13 October 1939

We are relieved to learn that the Cawnpore strike is being terminated. The workers have lost about 500,000 working days and borne much other suffering and inconvenience. This is the outcome of the strike. A significant feature of it was that it did not have the support of some of the prominent leaders of the Congress. Mr J. Nehru advised the labour leaders to press for arbitration and not to take precipitate action. 'I think', he said, 'it will be unfortunate if a general strike is started by the workers at this stage.' Generally speaking, this has not been the attitude of Congress leaders. The fact is that the strike was utterly unjustified and wholly misadvised. The Employers' Association informed the Government that they were agreeable to arbitration by an impartial judicial authority. In the Madras presidency, last year the Government appointed a High Court judge to inquire into a labour dispute. If the object of the labour leaders was not merely to make trouble; if they really felt that the workers had a legitimate grievance they should have accepted the employers offer. And we are sure that if the workers had been left to themselves they would have come to an amicable agreement with the employers. But herein lay the danger. If workers and employers were to settle their disputes peacefully, the occupation of the self-appointed labour leaders would be gone. And the more untenable the position of the leaders, the greater the need for resisting arbitration. Hence the strike.

That the workers have been put to so much loss and suffering for nothing—the terms which have been accepted were available to the workers before the strike—may not be a matter of very great concern to the labour leaders. The leader who advised the workers to 'die rather than yield', knew that whatever might happen to the workers, he would remain unscathed. But how long do the Government propose to tolerate this deplorable state of affairs? It has been estimated that in 1933–34, 2,090,202 working days were lost in the United Provinces. If we are not mistaken, in 1938 a much larger number of working days was lost in the city of Cawnpore alone. Dr Katju has expressed the opinion that 'no government, whether central or provincial, can possibly afford to ignore the real interests of the textile industry'. For the Government to suffer the labour leaders repeatedly to abuse their influence over the workers who, thanks to their illiteracy and ignorance can be easily misled, and to bring the textile industry to a standstill, is not the way to promote industrial advancement. Nothing is farther from our desire than to discourage the growth of trade unionism. This we have affirmed times out of number. But the movement must be conducted on proper lines and not as it is at Cawnpore. Here a handful of people who had a political axe to grind, employed questionable methods to work their will upon the helpless workers. If the Government really believe, as they say they do, that labour and capital are partners in a great national enterprise, these mischievous activities should be stopped without further delay.



71. Statistics of Industrial Disputes in British India,
Quarter Ending the 31st March 1939

Government of India, Department of Labour, 19 October 1939, File No. 12/4/39 Poll., NAI.

Table I *Classification of disputes by provinces for the quarter ending the 31st March 1939*

Province	Number of disputes	Number of workers involved	Days lost	Demands					
				Wages	Bonus	Personnel	Leave and hours	Others	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Assam	4	5,382	14,546	3	—	1	—	—	
Bengal	35	24,543	227,218	21	—	7	—	7	
Bihar	9	12,378	112,060	—	—	3	—	6	
Bombay	19	13,653	90,833	8	—	6	2	3	
Central Provinces and Berar	1	10,606	10,606	—	1	—	—	—	
Madras	18	16,455	308,410	4	—	6	2	6	
Punjab	7	344	1,028	6	—	1	—	—	
Sind	1	42	924	—	—	1	—	—	
United Provinces	11	4,967	37,626	4	—	5	—	2	
Total	105	88,370	803,251	46	1	30	4	24	

(Contd.)

<i>Province</i>	<i>Results</i>			<i>In progress</i>
	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Partially successful</i>	<i>Unsuccessful</i>	
<i>1</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>
Assam	-	3	1	-
Bengal	4	5	24	2
Bihar	-	4	4	1
Bombay	2	7	8	2
Central Provinces and Berar	-	1	-	-
Madras	3	7	3	5
Punjab	4	1	2	-
Sind	-	-	-	1
United Provinces	1	8	2	-
Total	14	36	44	11

72. Organization, Demand and Struggle of Mill Workers in the War Market, October 1939, Calcutta

This pamphlet was published in Bengali and Hindi and was issued by Bankim Mukherjee, member of the Legislative Assembly and President of the Bengal Central Jute Worker's Union. It was proscribed by the Bengal Government. A notification to this effect was issued by P.L. Martyn, deputy-secretary to the Government of Bengal on 24 October 1939.

Brethren,

War has begun. In the war market, capitalists in all countries make large profits; but there is no parallel to the profits made by the owners of jute-mills. Gunny is of great use in war, the demand for gunny-bags increases very much. During the last war, we saw it, this time also this has taken place. With the outbreak of war, the Indian Jute Mills Association received orders for six crores of bags. Even before a few days could pass, they have received further orders for 16 crores and 20 lakhs of bags.

What is The Policy of the Mill Owners?

The Mill Owners' Association is very powerful. They have arranged with the Government so that orders for all goods may come into the hands of their association. Those who had so long been retrenched on the pretext of trade depression have been summoned. All the looms have been put into operation. The Mill Owners' Association have decided to keep the mills running again for 54 hours instead of 40 hours per week. Very soon perhaps more work will be done. Is it out of sympathy with the sufferings of the workers that the mill owners have done it? No worker will believe it. The demand for workers has increased. If those who were dismissed are not today taken in again, the mill owners cannot make large profits. To retrench workers and to keep down their wages in the name of trade depression at a time when less profit may be made and not to give any surplus profits to the workers when trade goes up—this is the policy of the mill owners.

What is wanted by the Jute Mill Workers?

From 1937, jute mill workers have been fighting for their own demands and dues. But so long on the pretext of trade depression the owners have not fulfilled any of their demands. Time has now come to realize all those demands. In the war market, prices of articles have gone up. The prices of our rice, cereals, salt even of clothes have gone up. As days pass, the price of all commodities will go up more and more, it will not be possible to check it for a long time by legislation. In these circumstances, the expenditure of every worker is increasing. On a calculation it is found that the expenditure has already increased by about 25 per cent. In these circumstances, we want to inform the mill owners and the Government clearly about our demands. No pretext of theirs will now pass.

What is the Minimum Demand?

Our minimum demand at this moment.

1. 25 per cent war bonus. During the great war of 1914 the mill workers received it. This is only a small portion of the surplus profits of the mill owners.
2. The workers who have been dismissed during the ordinance and as a result of strikes, should be immediately given work. Unless all the workers of the Jute Mills could today be recruited to employment, the mill owners will try to suppress us by holding out threats of dismissal every now and then and will realize a good deal of work by payment of small wages. Our demand is that not a single worker of jute mills should remain unemployed.

3. Arrangement must be made so that no worker in a jute mill may have an income less than Rs 30 per month.
4. The workers in all the jute mills must be given permanent employment. It has come to be a rule with the jute mills to retrench thousands of workers at any time they please and to call them back to work according to their pleasure. By the adoption of this policy the mill owners keep intact their large profits even in a market of depression. The demand for permanent employment is one of our main demands.
5. Steps must be taken so that war ordinances or legislations might not impair the rights of the Trade Union movement.
6. Steps must be taken for old age pension.

The brave workers-brethren of Budge Budge and Manickpur have already begun a struggle to have the cut in their wages removed. The workers of Chitraganj have told the mill owners that they will not allow work for 54 hours unless the cut of one *anna* that had been made in their wages was restored. For one week they did not work for more than 40 hours. At Manickpur also, the women workers have come forward and expressed the demand for restoration of cuts in their wages. In this way there has been a stir among the workers of all jute mills for having their wages increased. But our demand will not be fulfilled unless a fight could be carried on in an equal manner in all areas.

The weapon of jute mill workers—Red Flag Unions.

The jute mill worker fights under the Red Flag for the sake of his demands. When the working hours were reduced by ordinance, when looms were stopped and thousands of workers were dismissed, the Red Flag Union protested against it. The Central Jute Mill Mazdoor Union decided to go on with an extensive strike, but as all the branches of the Central Union were not equally powerful, the workers could not advance in an equal manner in all areas. The weakness of the leadership of the Central Union revealed itself. True the power of the Union has increased as a result of meetings and conferences being held in all areas against the ordinance, but it has not been possible to oppose equally the attacks of mill owners at all places. Unless the weakness of the Union is driven off, we shall not be able to realize any of our demands. As a result of the emergency Legislation and Sec. 144 our facility for preaching about our demands by means of meetings and conferences outside mills have decreased to a large extent. In these circumstances, our main work will be to strengthen our Union within the mills.

Committee in Every Department.

Committee in every mill, Unions in every area.

How can the Union be strengthened? Form committees with all workers in every department. Increase your own unity by carrying on a fight over your daily demands. Form a committee in every mill with representatives of every departmental committee. Strengthen that Union by carrying on a fight over the demands of all workers in a mill. Form a Union in every area with representatives from every mill committee in the mills in that area. In this way genuine Unions will be built up in the different areas. The Central Jute Mill Mazdoor Unions will act as the leader of the workers of all mills. This is how the Red Flag Union is to be built up. If work is done in this manner, our unity will increase, leadership will be strengthened. We shall not give any room to any party-spirit or personal interests in our Unions. It is the interest of the workers that will be the first and sole interest of the Unions. The workers by becoming conscious will have to strengthen the leadership of the Central Unions.

Under the leadership of the Red Flag Union we demand:

25 per cent war-time bonus.

All unemployed jute mill workers must be provided with work. The monthly wages must be Rs 30 at the lowest.

Accept the Red Flag Union.

Victory to the Bengal Jute Mill Mazdoor Union.

Bankim Mukherjee,
President, Bengal Central Jute Mill
Mazdoor Union

The National Printers,
1 Narayan Basu Lane
Calcutta.

73. Cawnpore Labour Situation: Article by Balkrishna Sharma,¹
President, Kanpur City Congress Committee
AICC Papers, File No. G-35, Part 2, 1939, NMML.

My friend and colleague R.D. Bharadwaj² has already placed before the readers of the *National Front*, the salient features of the labour situation in Cawnpore. In this article, I propose to deal with those day-to-day difficulties which the worker has to put up with and which the Cawnpore Mazdoor Sabha has to face in order to keep the situation under control. Without entering into any sort of theoretical discussion regarding rights and duties of Capital and Labour, I want to narrate only those aspects of the labour problem, which have made Cawnpore situation once again delicate and tense, causing anxiety in the mind of an humble worker like me as to the future of the textile industry and the workers' lot in Cawnpore.

The readers of the journal might be aware that a deputation consisting of Comrades Bharadwaj, Shastri, Yusuf, Suraj Prasad Awasthi, Arjun Arora and myself waited on the Hon'ble Prime Minister and the Hon'ble Minister for Industries and Development on the 28th of May, 1939. We discussed the whole question threadbare and I am happy to announce that the Hon'ble Govind Ballabh Pant gave us a very patient and prolonged hearing. The discussion lasted for over five hours. We placed our whole case before the Government and the Hon'ble Prime Minister gave us an inkling of the Government's attitude in regard to the rights and privileges of capital and labour.

In order that the reader may be in a position to take up the thread of the Cawnpore Labour problems, I would like to take him to those anxious days and nights when we were engaged in a mighty struggle to vindicate our rights. The great general strike which was launched in the second week of May, 1938 had lasted for fifty days. Negotiations were going on all the time. On the fiftieth day, as the Government Publication says, 'A breakdown was imminent and preparations were being made for an intensification of the struggle, when the Hon'ble Premier was hurriedly summoned from Lucknow, where he had arrived only a few hours before from Bareilly. Supported by the Hon'ble Mr Kidwai, the premier held discussions at the Circuit House from five in the evening of July 3rd to five in the morning of July 4th. The prolonged efforts of the Hon'ble Premier resulted in bringing about a satisfactory understanding between the employers and labourers of Cawnpore and the strike ended after a peaceful struggle for 50 days.

I would not take much time by recapitulating how I and my colleagues from in the morning of the 3rd July to 11 in the night of July 4, continuously for 41 hours, were on our legs, rushing about, holding Strike Committee meetings, explaining the terms of the compromise to the workers and ultimately getting it ratified in the mammoth General meeting of the workers on the Parade Grounds. On the night of the 4th of July, 1938, the Government communiqué giving the details of the peace

terms is, however, important enough to claim our attention. It is now full eleven months that the compromise has been in existence and we would do well to see how many conditions thereof have been given effect to by the employers and the Government. That would give us an inkling to the spirit in which the employers have worked the compromise.

The very first term, agreed to by the Employers, related to the payment of wages to time-rate workers on a monthly basis on condition that for the purpose of calculation the month should consist of 26 working days. I would remind the readers that the Rajendra Prasad Committee had recommended that the time-workers in factories should get their wages on a monthly basis, so that they may not have to suffer cuts in their wages when the factories remain closed on holidays, other than Sundays. The system of monthly payment was in vogue in Cawnpore up to the year 1929. It has stopped since then. The UP Government in their resolution on the Rajendra Prasad Committee had clearly said that it 'also agrees with the Committee that instead of daily wages, the monthly basis should be accepted for all time-workers'. In spite of a definite undertaking, the term of the agreement has not been, so far, fulfilled by the Employers.

Secondly, the Employers, the Workers' Representatives and the Government had agreed to the formation of the Wage Fixation Board. Eleven months have passed. The Board has not yet come into existence. The conditions to day have changed the situation to such an extent that the workers have begun to feel the necessity of the Wage Fixation Board all the more keenly. What those changed conditions are, I will explain later. Suffice it to say for the present, that the Board, which shall consist of fifty-fifty membership of the representatives of the Capital and Labour has not yet been constituted.

Thirdly, the question of framing rules dealing with overlapping and multiple shifts, has not yet been taken up. No doubt the Labour Commissioner, in consultation with the Mazdoor Sabha and the Employers has evolved a system of shifts which is known as the Japanese system. That arrangement is working for the time being. But the absence of any rules and regulations in this respect is fraught with danger in as much as it leaves discretionary powers of shift arrangements to the Employers only. I hope, the Government will take the earliest opportunity to make rules about shift arrangements.

Fourthly, the Government had accepted the principle of establishing a Government Labour Exchange. The Employers also had promised to co-operate with it and help it. That institution has not been set up yet. How serious consequences have followed from the non-existence of the Public Exchange and how the policy of the Employers association regarding the recruitment of labour has resulted in heart-burning and dissatisfaction, are matters which I will revert to after I finish with the terms of the compromise.

Fifthly, the Employers had agreed, that there will be no change in conditions of work or service as compared with those prevailing when the strike began. Conditions of work and service included (1) change in wages or wage rates or hours of work on reduction or increase in number of persons employed, (2) Dismissal of workers except in consonance with legal or customary requirements, (3) Introduction of rationalization, (4) starting, alternation or discontinuance of shifts, (5) withdrawal of any customary concession etc. (6) withdrawal or granting recognition to unions of workers and (7) introduction of new rules of discipline etc. I am pained to find that in most of the conditions of work and service changes have taken place without any regard for the term of the compromise governing such changes.

Sixthly, the Mazdoor Sabha still remains unrecognized by the Employers' Association. The Government have already recognized the Sabha as the representative of factory labour in Cawnpore. The Employers' Association is still adamant. The result is delay, dissatisfaction and circuitous method of dealing with problems arising from day-to-day.

These are, however, some of the points which have not been tackled so far either by the Government or by the Employers. Over and above these, there are many other matters which our Deputation has brought to the notice of the Government.

Those, who have kept themselves in close touch with Labour situation in Cawnpore, know how, after the last General Strike, the workers have been treated by the Employers. Persistent efforts have been made to demoralize them in order to break their solidarity. The enormity of such efforts can easily be estimated by the reader when he knows that during the last 9 months or so, as many as 1000 workers have either been retrenched or dismissed on baseless or flimsy pretexts. Such dismissals and retrenchments do create a feeling of frustration in the mind of the worker. That feeling in turn drives him to desperation. That is what the employers want. Believe me, it has been a hell of a job for the Sabha workers to keep the labour under control. It is not only the policy of the dismissals, but the policy of recruitment also which is responsible for the present day tension in the industry. The Employers have their own labour exchange. The Employers Association employs men who are either notorious black-legs or men of jobbers and Mistries. The recruitment takes place on the recommendation of such men. Communal considerations also play a large part in recruiting labour. Bribery and corruption, flattery and anti-Sabha attitude result from this policy. Reports have come to me which tell me that even *goondas* can be found amongst those who roam about in the residential areas of labourers threatening them with serious consequences in the name of the Employers Association. Small wonder if such policy creates resentment in the worker.

If the employers had stopped at this only, I would have thanked my stars. They have gone a step further and have tried, and are even now trying to create company unions amongst the Textile workers of the city. In the beginning efforts were made to start a Muslim Mazdoor Sabha when these efforts did not succeed, a parallel Mazdoor Union was conceived. That efforts also proved abortive. Then some hirelings were let loose amongst the depressed class workers and a depressed class Mazdoor Sabha was brought into existence. The Employers' Association is in no better position today for all these acrobatic feats. If anything, these things have, still further, exaggerated the feelings of the workers and have made all efforts at conciliation and understanding look ridiculous.

Then again intensification of work has been proceeding with rapidity. In J.K. Manufacturers and the Elgin Mills efforts were and are being made to take more work by asking workers to work on more machines than one. I am told that workers in the Textile Mills have been asked to work on three looms. I may here add that this intensification is not, in any sense, an effort in the direction of rationalization. The old machines are there. The old arrangement is there. So that if a worker is asked, under such circumstances, to work on two or three machines, the process cannot be called by an other name except 'intensification'. The reader will remember that the Employers had agreed to give a notice of 15 days if any change were to be introduced in conditions of work and service. So far as I know no notice was given, either to the Labour Commissioner or to the workers regarding the change, requiring workers to work on more machines than they had been working hitherto. But the thing does not stop here. The owners are making preparations for a wage cut. The new Victoria Mills and the J.K. Jute Mills have already notified to the Labour Commissioner their determination to reduce the wages. I am told that one more mill has surreptitiously introduced wage-cuts even without a notice. My colleagues in the Sabha are making inquiries about it. And we shall soon bring to light the name of and facts about this daring Mill. These are some of our troubles you, dear Editor, have taken very keen interest in our movement. I would just ask you how best we should come out of the tangle without disturbing very much the present cobweb of society. You know, we, the labour workers do not want to destroy the industry.

Nor do we want to throw our men to wolves of hunger and torment. We do realize our own limitations. The capitalist society is there and all the limitations pertaining to it shall have to be taken into account. But if the Employers continue to betray absolute lack of imagination, how long shall we succeed in keeping the Frankenstein Monster under control?

¹ Balkrishna Sharma 'Naveen' (1897–1962); born at Bhyana, Shajapur district, Madhya Bharat; educated at Shajapur, Ujjain and Kanpur; Participated in Non-Cooperation movement and was arrested, 1921; Joint Editor, *Prabha*, a monthly, 1923; Editor, *Pratap*, 1923 and 1924, later became its publisher, Editor and Life-Trustee; participated in Civil Disobedience movement, 1930–34, and was imprisoned; President, Madhya Bharatiya Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1930–31, and 1952–53; Chairman, Kanpur City Congress Committee, 1936–37; member, UPPCC and AICC for 34 years; member, Constituent Assembly, 1946–50, Provisional Parliament, 1950–52, Lok Sabha, 1952–57 and Rajya Sabha, 1960; publications include: *Kavya Rachnavali*, and *Pranayapan*.

² R.D. Bharadwaj (1908–48) was a Communist leader; he became the member of Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India in 1934. Associated with Cawnpore Mill Workers Association during 1937–39; he played a very important role in the Cawnpore Trade Union Movement; he was associated with All India Kisan Sabha for a very long time as an underground Communist leader; he used to write in *Congress*.

74. Baranagore Jute Mills Closed

Hindustan Times, 15 November 1939.

Calcutta
14 November 1939

About 9000 workers of the Baranagore South and Baranagore East Jute Mills in Baranagore, 24 Parganas, struck work this morning, and the mills have been closed as a consequence. The demand of the workers is stated to be an increase of one *anna* six pies in the rupee in their wages, which had been reduced three years ago.

The spinners and weavers of the Fort William Jute Mill in Shibpur numbering about 8000 also struck work today, demanding an increase in wages, and the mill has been closed. This brings the total number of workers going on strike since this morning in the four jute mills, namely, Baranagore South Jute Mill, Baranagore East Mill, Hastings Jute Mill and Fort William Jute Mill to 21,000.

Another 10,000 workers of the Hukumchand Group of Mills in Naihati are already on strike, over the question of wages for the last four days. Another 10,000 workers belonging to the Howrah Jute Mills and about 4000 to the Ganges Jute Mill, both in Howrah district, struck work after the midday recess today, making a similar demand.

75. Labour Movement in Kalyan

Report of meeting at Ghashtai, Taluka Kalyan, Maharashtra State Archives, Home Deptt., Special Branch, File No. 927-A, Part III.

Ghashtai,
Taluka Kalyan,
16 November 1939

Jaitu Namaji Patil spoke first and said, 'We have assembled here to think about our "khand" to be paid to the Sawkars this year. There is a famine this year and we are unable to pay our khand. We shall however decide this question in our conference which is to be held at Kalyan; till that time you should not pay your khand. Do not be afraid of the Sawkars because according to the new law

they cannot attach your necessities of life. You should not pay your debts also as Peasants' Debt Relief Bill has been passed and it will soon come into effect. If the Sawkars threaten you, you should not be afraid of them. You should all unite and strike a blow of your unity on the heads of these Sawkars. We toil in the fields day and night and so we must get sufficient to eat. These Sawkars do nothing and enjoy the fruit of your labours. Another law about lessening the peasants' "Khand" has also been passed. More information about these laws will be given by our leaders and so I close my speech after thanking you all for giving me an opportunity to work amongst you.'

D.K. Desai said, 'The audience for today's meeting is very poor. The reason is that the Sawkars bring difficulties in your way and try to mislead you by spreading false rumours. You must not be misled by these Sawkars, you must unite like the peasants of Badlapur and must not allow them to suck your blood. If you bring about your unity, you can drive away the Sawkars like Ganpatrao Phadke, in no time. We must learn how to rescue ourselves from the clutches of these Sawkars and for this unity is the chief thing. We are going to hold a conference on the 10th of December next and you should all attend to it. If you make it a success by your unity, you can do away with these Sawkars. Tell the Sawkars that we are not going to pay our khand until it is decided in the conference. If they do not listen you should drive them away from your house. Do not be afraid of the police if they threaten you just as they did today. We must prepare ourselves to put up a fight with them also. They are taking down notes to report what is going on here and thus to bring us into troubles. We must not mind this but we must organize more and more. Do not pay khand, debt and "palemodi". We can do a lot if we unite. United we stand, divided we fall. I wish to move through villages and do more work. Give all your complaints in the office of the "Sangh" at Kalyan. Kanekar pleader and I shall forward them to the proper authorities.'

N.W. Phadke said, 'Today's meeting is an important one and still people have not attended it in large numbers. Sawkars are at the bottom of it. They wish that such meetings should not be held and if at all they are held, peasants should not attend them. They wish to keep them in dark because they (meetings) are against their interest. These Sawkars therefore try to put obstacles in your way. As a matter of fact these meetings are held in your own interest and you should not be misled by the Sawkars. You should not be afraid of them. You should tell all your fellow men and attend such meetings in thousands in future if you want to be benefited. You know that we have started Kalyan Taluka Shetkari Sangh (Kalyan Taluka Farmers Association). Its office is at Kalyan. The object of the Sangh is to make the farmers, owners of the lands and to remove this Sawkari system. Although the Sangh is established only one year ago, it has done many good things for the peasants. Peasants from Ambernath side know how they are benefited by becoming members of the Sangh. Some of their grievances were redressed last year. So it is in your own interests to be members of the Sangh. We are going to hold a big conference on the 10th of December next somewhere near Kalyan. You will receive handbills. You should all attend it in great number. Questions regarding the interests of the peasants will be discussed there. Some resolutions will be passed and you will have to work to bring those resolutions into practice. The question regarding the khand to be paid this year to the Sawkars will be decided in that conference and so you should withhold your khand till that time. You should not pay anything to the Sawkars till that time. You should not pay anything to the Sawkars till the conference is over. You should not be afraid of them. If the Sawkars bring Pathans and Bhayyas to collect the khand, drive them away per force. You should tell them that if they bring Pathans, you will break their heads. Pathans and Bhayyas cannot do anything if you are all united. Government have recently passed some laws favourable to the peasants. You need not now be afraid of those Sawkars. The only thing that is required is your unity and you can guard your own interests. You must all make united efforts and you can succeed in bringing those laws into action. You must solve the question of your bread. In Europe,

war has begun between Germany and England. The Mamlatdars and collectors will come to you to ask for help. Think for yourself whether you should go in for war, get Rs 17 as pay until you live and die on the field. Ask the Government what they would give in return for your (peasants) lives lost in the war and if they can give you lands of the Sawkars and relieve from the burden of your debts, tell them that you are prepared to help in the war. Tell again the English Government that they are looting us for the last 150 years by taking big salaries by thousands and if they stop this, then only you can help them. It will be decided in the next conference as to whether the peasants should help Government in the war with men. Until that time do not give any help. I lastly request you all that you should ask all your neighbours and friends to attend the conference on 10th December as many important things are to be discussed and decided there.'

S.V. Parulekar repeated the same substance in different words. He said, 'The rainy season has gone. The crops are reaped. Seeing the heap of crops the farmers should be glad. But the peasants are never glad for they know that all the grain is to go to the Sawkars' house. The Sawkars and the Inamdars are ready to exact the grain from the peasants by force. Even in years when the crops grew full well, the farmer has to half-starve. But this year the farmer gets only 4-6 anna crop. He is worried much today and is in a dilemma as to how we should pay the Sawkars. The purpose of this meeting is to think about this. If one or two farmers tell landlord Phadke that they are unable to pay 'Makta' because they get only 6 anna crop, he would reply to them by bringing two Pathans and taking away the corn. If all the peasants unite and say that they cannot pay the makta this year, Phadke cannot dare to take away any corn. A few handful of Sawkars and Inamdars cannot even dare to live at Kalyan if all the farmers unite and put forward their demands.

'It is you peasants that toil in the fields in the hot sun and pouring rain. But the fruit of your labour goes to the Sawkars who is stranger to sun and rain and who is enjoying luxuries. Who has the right claim to live, the hard working peasant or the Sawkar who rolls in luxuries?

'If you all unite and decide in the conference that no khand should be given this year, even the Government cannot do anything. There are no sufficient prisons to accommodate all the peasants of Kalyan Taluka if they are imprisoned. If you all say with one voice that because of the failure of the crops, khand is not to be given this year, even the Government cannot dare to exact khand from you. You need not fear anybody. Many laws favourable to the peasants are passed. The peasant working in a field for 6 years cannot be dispersed with. The lands cannot be taken from you. If you stand united you will be immensely benefited. Now the Sawkar is not to settle the makta but the Mamlatdar is to settle it. If pressure is brought on the Mamlatdar by us all, he must reduce the khand. In the conference a resolution concerning the lessening of the makta is to be brought. In the next year, we shall try to get reduced the makta by approaching the Mamlatdars. Another important thing to be remembered is that Debt Relief bill is passed. The substance of it is that the debt is not to be paid if the debtor is unable to pay it. In the next conference, resolutions regarding the payment of makta, Debt and lessening the makta are to be passed.

'The Government also will come to you to ask for help. They will ask for you youths between 17 to 35. They will be taken to the battlefield and will have to die before they receive Rs 17 as a month's pay. The Sawkars and the zamindars though they are young and sturdy, they will not go. If the Collector or the Sub Inspectors come to you, tell them that they should go first and we may do as we like. If the Government is ready to solve our difficulties by giving lands and plenty of money, then we may think of helping them. Tell them that you are not ready to lay down your life for a trifling amount. If the Government tries to take your men by force, you must oppose it. Think about all these things. You must try to bring out unity among yourself and attend the conference on 10th December and we shall discuss all things there.'

K.T. Jaywant thanked on behalf of peasants the guests of the day for their anxious care of the peasants and sound advice they gave to them and the correct guidance given to them.

The meeting terminated after N.W. Phadke thanked the audience who had come from a distance of 5–10 miles and requested them to attend the meetings of the like kind and the conference, and told the peasants to face the Sawkars and the Inamdars unitedly.

76. Strike in Hathras

Vartman (Hindi Daily, Kanpur), 22 December 1939.

Hathras (Aligarh District)
20 December 1939

Reports from Hathras show that due to the rise in prices of essential commodities because of the war, the workers had presented a demand for a rise in wages which was not accepted. So the workers have gone on strike.

The Labour Officer visited Hathras on receiving news of the strike.

The workers demonstrated in front of him. Nearly 3000 workers participated in the demonstration.

77. Labour Strike at Digboi

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 23 December 1939.

21 December 1939

The following resolution has been published by the Government of Assam on the report of the Board of Conciliation by Mr K.K. Hajara ICS and of the Committee of Enquiry in the affairs at Digboi by Sir M.N. Mukherjee and Mr G.D. Walker ICS:

The strike on the oil fields of the Assam Oil Company which was declared on the 3rd April 1939 attracted so much public attention for various reasons, particularly the completeness and determined nature of the stoppage, and the unfortunate occurrence of the 18th April, in which three men lost their lives that the late Government decided to appoint a Committee of Enquiry into the origins and facts of the dispute, to be presided over by an eminent lawyer and ex-Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, Sir Manmatha Nath Mukherjee. The appointment of the committee was announced by Resolution No. 4420-H of the 10th July 1939, and the terms of reference were as follows:

1. To enquire into the events leading to the incident of the 18th April and into those subsequent thereto in so far as they are not sub-judice.
2. To enquire into the measures and actions taken by local authorities before, during and after the occurrence; and
3. To consider the origin and causes of the strike and to suggest means whereby strikes of this nature can be avoided in future.

Mr G.D. Walker, MBE, ICS, was appointed a Member of the Committee for the purpose of the second term of reference. Meanwhile the continuance of the strike was causing so much loss and hardship to both the parties concerned, employers and employed, that the late Government felt that they ought not to postpone further attempts at settlement until the report of Sir Manmatha Nath Mukherjee was received, and therefore decided to appoint a Board of Conciliation, in order if possible to bring about a settlement. Mr K.K. Hajara ICS, District and Sessions Judge, have

therefore constituted a Board of Conciliation under Section 3 of the Trade Disputes Act, 1929 by Notification No. 4730-G.J. of the 26th July 1939, and entered upon his task the same day. The attempt was however infructuous, and Mr Hajara presented his report on the 8th August; the report is, under Section 12 of the Trade Disputes Act, published as Annexure 1 to this Resolution.

On receipt of the report of the Board of Conciliation, the late Government carefully considered the recommendations which had been made, in accordance with Section 7(3) of the Act: they found, however, that the principal of these concerned the re-instatement or re-employment *en masse* of the strikers in the employ of the Company, whereas this was the main point which the Company had made it very clear that they could not concede, since it would involve the employment of men for whom there was no work, and also the discharge of men taken on after the beginning of the strike, to whom the Company considered itself bound by valid engagement. This crucial point of dispute, if it were to be fully and fairly treated, clearly raised the vital question of the origins of the strike, which was one of the main objects of the enquiry which Sir Manmatha Nath Mukherjee's Committee was about to make. The late Government therefore considered that there was no option but to postpone the consideration of Mr Hajara's report until that of the Committee should be available. The latter was received on the 3rd December, and the present Government have taken immediate steps to have it published, as Annexure II to this Resolution. This report is not rendered less important by the fortuitous conjunction of events resulting from the declaration of War exactly five months after the strike began, when the Digboi-Tinsukia area was declared protected under the Defence of India Ordinance owing to the national importance of the oil products in time of War, the removal from the neighbourhood of nine strike leaders whose conduct was preventing the resumption of work and the consequent collapse of the strike. Indeed, it was and remains an unfortunate feature that the Enquiry was not complete and the Report available before these measures had to be taken. Nevertheless the prompt and willing return to work which actually occurred after the removal of these leaders, so that in a very short space of time the company had all the workers it required, was itself very significant as to the presence or absence of real dissatisfaction among the workers.

Government have not yet framed their final conclusions on the recommendations in these reports which concern the welfare of labour, but they consider it desirable to make these recommendations public at once, now that the obstacles to full understanding of the situation are removed.

That part of the third term of reference which deals with the origin and causes of the strike may conveniently be treated first, as it is so closely related to the failure of the conciliation proceedings. The Committee's report summarizes the conclusions regarding this item in a few sentences which make it abundantly clear that there was no sufficient cause for the strike either in the working conditions or in the actions of the Company and that it must be ascribed to the ambition of a few individuals and their determination to impose their will at whatever cost in hardship to the men and loss of production to their employers, by methods which in some respects can only meet with severe condemnation. That there may be matters in which it will be desirable to work for better relations between the Company and its employees or to examine the contentions of the latter the Report does not seek to dispute, and it will be the business of Government after further study of all the available papers to address themselves to a solution of any outstanding questions. But there can be no doubt on an impartial review such as that to which it has now been subjected that this strike ought never to have been declared or persisted in.

The conclusions regarding the first and second terms of reference, though these occupy a very large part of the Report can be briefly disposed of: the Committee found little of a serious nature to criticize either in the measures taken by the local officers or in the actions of any of those

concerned with the events leading up to the riot of the 18th April or those subsequent. There were in the view of the Committee cases of indiscretion here and there: but it is very satisfactory that the Committee's Report should have disclosed nothing for which it should be necessary to call any Government servant to account. In so far as Government may find it necessary or expedient to give further attention to the isolated incidents upon which the Committee have commented unfavourably to the individuals concerned, they will of course take into account all the available material, of which, as Mr Walker points out in his additional Memorandum, the Committee could not be aware. The Report as a whole carried on its face the imprint of impartiality and judicial fairness.

The Committee felt that the incident of the 18th April must be considered outside the scope of their enquiry, and since the report of the Magistrate who enquired into the matter at once and on the spot was published in May last and nothing has since occurred to necessitate further explanation of the facts. Government do not consider it relevant to the present matters under discussion to comment upon the incident.

In the latter part of its Report on the third term of reference, however, the Committee makes recommendations with respect to establishment of a machinery for the prevention of unnecessary strikes, and the settlement of such real disputes as may arise, which must receive the most careful consideration of Government. The conclusions are put in the form of proposals for legislation. The question of legislation has in fact been under examination for some time, and Government will give it their fullest attention. It will in this connection be necessary to consider the position and conditions of the tea industry which employs so large proportion of labour in Assam, but has not been dealt with either in the Reports now before Government or in the recent legislation in other Provinces.

There is also the question whether an official labour organization, trained to treat labour and its problems with sympathy and understanding, is not a necessary adjunct to any legislation of this kind, and may not even be a prior requirement, if due account is to be taken of existing conditions in the framing of the law. This will have to be duly weighed.

Government take this opportunity of recording their gratitude for the care with which Mr Hajara, and Sir Manmatha Nath Mukherjee, with his colleague Mr G.D. Walker, have studied the problems set before them and prepared their several reports, which are of great interest.

78. After the General Strike

New Age, December 1939.

Critic

The Cawnpore general strike was a mighty united forward thrust of the working class but not a decisive victory. The owners who had been forced to accept the settlement which embodied the recognition of the Mazdoor Sabha sought every opportunity, from the very first day, to smash the settlement and restore the old days of unbridled exercise of the autocratic regime over the lives of the workers and the conditions of work inside the factories. The workers had passed through a successful general strike and acquired a sense of triumph and self-confidence. Their enthusiasm for organization knew no bounds. The sympathy of the non-proletarian masses was with the cause of the workers; the unity of the Congress with the Mazdoor Sabha remained intact. Would the owners' sabotage of the settlement be defeated, would the basic demands of the workers for a wage increase be successfully won through the Enquiry Committee, would the united front with the Congress be carried a stage further and become a normal feature of the political life at Cawnpore, acting as an impregnable bulwark of the people's rights against the peoples' enemies and becoming

an example to the rest of the country? These problems arose out of the general strike and after the settlement and the desired result depended, as we have shown in the previous article, primarily upon the ability of the Red group to successfully effect the organizational turn—from a small group to a mass political force, organizer and educator of the entire mass of workers and not only of the militant vanguard, active builder of the United National Front (UNF) and not only of the isolated class front of the proletariat.

Spate of Stay-in-Strike

The general strike was called off on 10th August, and immediately the Mill committees began to be formed, and mass enrolment in the unions began. The management wanted to run the mills as if the general strike had not occurred at all and restore the same old conditions as existed before. They attempted mass victimization and would not apply in practice the various demands already accepted in the settlement. The workers inside every department of almost all the mills resorted to prompt stay-in-strikes, some times lasting a few hours only or a day or so and sometimes the stoppage involving the entire mill. The workers, under the leadership of their Mill committee, would promptly act as a united force demanding the actual application of the terms of the settlement until the management came down on its knees or the officials of the Mazdoor Sabha came down to the spot and settled the issue and asked them to resume work. This stage of spontaneous departmental struggles lasted for a whole fortnight and as a result the offensive of mass victimization was beaten back and the owners realized that inside the factories old conditions could not be restored in their entirety. They beat a retreat but began their game again not with victimization of whole sections of workers but of individual militants, the leaders of the Mill Committees.

This period revealed not only the strength but also the weakness of the workers movement. These days were reminiscent of the days immediately following the 1928 general strike in Bombay. The Cawnpore proletariat had won its first large-scale victory, and because of the elementary stage of its ideological consciousness it became not only self-confident but overconfident; it not only realized its strength but over-estimated it. The entire class had been vitalized by action, at one leap it had achieved success; it was flushed with victory but lacked maturity and had not yet been steeled by varied experience. The ideological level of the class as a whole was very low. The general mass of workers had not been influenced by class proletarian ideology. There was no proletarian press, because freedom of speech was lacking and the old Government would not give a declaration to start a militant paper. The attendance in general mass meetings before the general strike was considered 'good' when it reached two thousands or so. A militant speech meant almost certain prosecution for sedition or under a similar section. Section 144 was more often than not in operation, banning all meetings and demonstrations. Class political education was thus imparted through semi-secret study-circles or in small groups conducted by the Reds, and naturally touched only a small section of the militant workers and not the general mass. Ideological propaganda had not been widely done during the course of the general strike which lasted only a week and there was hardly time to deal in speeches with anything more than immediate vital issues. The Bombay proletariat had got its first lessons in class proletarian ideology through listening to strike speeches for about six months. Immediately after the general strike, therefore, the strength of the proletariat was elemental and its consciousness primitive while it was faced with a complicated situation and difficult tasks. The danger lay in the factor that all this constituted a fertile ground for the (agent) provocateur and as we will endeavour to show later, *the systematic policy pursued by the owners has been one of provocation and the key-note of the tactics adopted by the Reds was to save the working class from falling victims to it.*

The Owners' Policy

In a press statement on the 6th Sept., Yusuf, the Red Gen. Secy. of the Mazdoor Sabha stated:

'We have the most reliable information at our disposal that the mill owners in their meeting have decided to get out of the compromise, to refuse cooperation with the Enquiry Committee and to declare lock-out all the mills of the city. The move has been thoroughly planned and the various steps decided upon. To precipitate matters they have prepared lists of the most active Trade unionists in each mill, and decided to give them warning on the false pretext of inefficiency and later to turn them out of work. If any resistance is put on the part of workers to this victimization, lock-out for indefinite period is to be declared. The mill owners want that such situation should be brought about in several mills immediately so that when the Enquiry Committee meets, the mill owners may make the situation a pretext for not facing the Enquiry. The statements that have been issued on behalf of the Mill Owners' Association alleging indiscipline and terrorism on the part of the workers were the preparatory steps to the final game of repudiating the Compromise and the Enquiry.'

The whole period of the aftermath of the general strike bears out Yusuf's clear-headed characterization of the owners' policy whose one single aim has been to provoke the workers into premature action and use it as a pretext to repudiate the settlement and get out of the recognition of the Mazdoor Sabha, give a chance to the police to intervere and smash the growing organized strength of the workers, force the Congress Ministry to take executive action against the working class and its leaders and thus breach the united front between the Congress and the Labour.

Yusuf very aptly posed the problem thus:

'Here are the mill-owners and the mill officials who with impunity break the terms of compromise, break the law of the land, who sit with rods in their hands to assault the workers inside the mills whenever they thought necessary, who deny the worker the right of organization and ordinary human rights, and who in defiance of all considerations of the interests of workers and of the general public conspire in the Mill Owners' Association to get out of the compromise as well as of the Enquiry and to declare lock-out in the entire industry. We would ask whether this conspiracy against the workers, against the public and against the Congress Ministry and its programme will be allowed to proceed unhindered unhampered.'

None except the Reds saw the real danger on its entirety and they alone had to avert it almost single-handed. This has been the most tragic feature of the situation after the general strike.

Individual Strikes in Defence of the Settlement

Immediately after the general strike when the period of departmental struggles and sudden stoppages of work began, the officials of the Mazdoor Sabha settled them, in some cases even by foregoing some of the workers' demands, only to get the chance to consolidate the organizational strength of the working class. The owners thus failed in their provocative tricks, took to victimizing groups of militant workers and important worker functionaries of the Mill Committees, thinking this will either lead to an estrangement between the Mill Committees and the Mazdoor Sabha if the latter did not support direct action, and if it did, it will be their chance to repudiate the settlement on the ground that the Mazdoor Sabha 'cannot exercise control' over the workers, or if the Mazdoor Sabha could get the Mill Committees to submit to a systematic victimization of active militants, the Mill Committees would stand discredited before the general mass of workers and their enthusiasm for organization cool off.

Individual strikes against victimization began in Swadeshi Cotton Mill on 31st August and lasted up to 20 September, the strike lasted in the Textile Mill up to 20th September, in the

Muir Mills there was stoppage of work on 2nd September and a lock-out lasted from 8th September to 25th September. In a few other Mills as well there were lightning strikes lasting a few days. The militancy of the workers remained unbroken, black-legging was rendered impossible.

Imperialist Advice to the Congress Ministry

Imperialism was not slow to realize the danger to its rule in the remarkable political and organizational significance of the general strike which had been conducted on the basis of unity of action between the Congress and labour and which had resulted in building a bit of UNF in practice. The Pioneer launched an offensive against the UNF under the demand 'Extern or Intern the Red leaders.' The Imperialist game was to split the UNF, already achieved by provoking the Congress Ministry to take action against the Red leaders and the working class movement. In its Editorial on 6th Sept. the *Statesmen* wrote:

'Congress Ministries, faced with the extra-ordinary difficult position of the poacher, turned game-keeper over night and have acquitted themselves up to date remarkably well... It can still pass as amusing that a Premier should encourage a crowd to shout "Inquilab Zindabad" but it will soon sound ridiculous and finally become impossible... Though in no province can the path of Ministers be described as smooth or easy, it is in the United Provinces that the most difficult adjustment has to be made. The Congress has its shades which vary with local leadership and local problems, from the blameless white of a purely nationalistic Capitalism to yellow and pale pink, and even the deep red of Socialism and Communism. The UP may fairly be described as the reddest spot on the Congress party map.... We have no doubt that they (the UP Ministry) are giving grave consideration to the menacing situation in Cawnpore, where the settlement has proved no settlement at all and open hostility to law and order is being advertised... In an unusually difficult situation unusual courage is required and its manifestation should not be unduly delayed.'

The *Pioneer*, in its Editorial of 26th Oct. pressing the same line under 'Government's Duty in Cawnpore', wrote:

'What steps are the UP Govt, going to take to deal with a situation which is becoming daily more dangerous?... The Mazdoor Sabha is not a Trade Union at all. It is divided as to its leadership, into Reds and those who have little sympathy with the Reds but are afraid to stand up against them... As sincere supporters of genuine Trade Unionism we say that the Prime Minister, who knows the facts, at least as well as we do, should forthwith withdraw recognition from it and refuse to renew it until it is reconstituted under responsible leadership. To do so may cause trouble—but not half as much trouble as will be caused by allowing Cawnpore to drift to disaster.'

The imperialist advice to the Congress Ministry is unambiguously clear and no less the danger from it to our democratic rights and national unity.

Enter the Communalist Provocateur

It was at this stage that the communalist provocation openly raised its head. We have stated in the previous article how the *Ittihad Millat* worked to disrupt the proletarian ranks by attempting to get the settlement denounced, and how they were overcome. So effective was the isolation of communalism that the Secretary of the *Ittihad Millat* was forced to come out with a statement asking the workers to accept the settlement. During the general strike all attempts at manufacturing a communal riot were nipped in the bud by the militant unity of the workers and the communalist provocateurs saw that a frankly communalist course had no chances of success and the *Ittihad Millat* has been rendered unpopular. The more respectable Muslim League now entered the scene and its agents began working avowedly as Trade Unionists, inside the Mill Committees, and kept their Muslim League stamp to themselves. They did not adopt any form of open mass agitation

but concentrated on cultivating individual contacts. Their communal activities began in the semi-secret 'Mazdoor Council'. These communalist agents were in direct touch with the Nawabs of Chattari and Jahangirabad whose one aim was to discredit and pull down the Congress Ministry.

It was at the end of these individual strikes, on the 19th September that they came out in the open and advanced the slogan of an immediate general strike, and got it passed from their Mazdoor Council. The Muslim League, led by the Nawabs and Knights, preached the sanctity of private property, demanded *Jehad* against Communism, but in Cawnpore it had become an advocate of general strike, and a champion of the workers' interests! The aim remained the same—splitting our national and class ranks—the method of pursuing it alone differed.

The Enquiry Committee Meets

On 16th September the Enquiry Committee headed by Babu Rajendra Prasad met. The first issue that came before it was that of victimization which had resulted in these individual strikes and whose settlement was necessary so that the Enquiry Committee could begin its work in a calm atmosphere. Babu Rajendra Prasad suggested that the Committee would give its decision on these victimizations at the end of the Enquiry and in the meantime these workers be considered as suspended and made other similar alternative suggestions. The Mazdoor Sabha accepted them to provide the Congress Ministry a chance of putting through the labour policy enunciated in the Congress Election Manifesto. The owners, however, turned down all proposals and stated that they would in no case re-instate the victimized workers. The Congress Hindi daily, *Pratap* wrote, 'Owing to the attitude of the mill owners the problem could not be solved and a critical situation has arisen. It appears from the attitude of the owners that they are not at all eager for a settlement, but would stick to their false prestige and rather than easing the critical strike situation, want to render it more complicated. The majority of the members of the committee appeared pained and troubled by this attitude of the owners.' Even the *Leader* correspondent referred to the 'inelastic' attitude of the owners. Babu Rajendra Prasad asked the Premier to appoint a Judicial officer to enquire into the issue of these victimizations and give a verdict before his committee could proceed with its work. The committee dispersed to meet on the 15th November.

Individual Strikes Called Off

On 19th September due to the initiative of the Reds, a Joint Conference of the Mill, Committees was held and after a full-scale discussion it was decided to call off these individual strikes and put the case of these victimized workers before the Judicial officer appointed by the Congress Cabinet. On the same day, the Muslim League 'Mazdoor Council' had called for a general strike. The strikes were successfully called off, defeating the Muslim League provocation and demonstrating the mass influence of the Reds. On 27th September, Yusuf issued the long leaflet. 'Aj Majdooron Ka Farz' declaring that the fundamental task before the workers today was organizational consolidation and preparation for the Enquiry Committee, that the individual strikes had served the purpose of beating back the offensive of mass victimization and proving to the management the undying determination of the workers to resist the reimposition of pre-general strike slave conditions of work inside the factories, that the immediate declaration of a general strike was being called for by the workers' enemies to provoke them into a premature clash so that their gains may be stolen from them, and then to get their organization smashed and their further progress checkmated, and unity with the Congress broken.

Nehru's Wrong Advice

Nehru visited Cawnpore for a few hours on 20th September and on 23rd published an 'Open Letter to the Cawnpore workers'. His desire was to help the workers' cause but in practice he caused harm. 'I rejoice to think that you have gained in strength, but at the same time I grow anxious lest you should take a false step, and all this enthusiasm might die down; and whatever little you have gained might also disappear.'

He propounded to the workers the lie, however learned its defence, of orthodox capitalist economics. 'The workers should not forget that after all their wages are paid out of the profits made by the mills and factories.' Nehru did not seem to realize that he had conceded the very premise on which the owners would resist a wage increase.

He preached to them the need of creating a strong Trade Union organization in a manner as if organization was an alternative to struggle, not realizing that in a colonial slave country Imperialism by suppressing civil liberties, does not permit the workers to freely organize themselves, forgetting the entire history of the Indian working class movement in which genuine Trade Unions had been raised *through* struggles, ignoring the reality that the Mazdoor Sabha itself had been transformed into a *mass* union as a result of the general strike and the basic fact that these individual strikes, which had called forth this letter from him, had been resorted to in defence of the right of organization.

'The right to dismiss a worker who does not do his work well should be conceded to the mill manager.' Nehru failed to see the reality that inefficiency was being used by the management as a plea for victimization. Further, as a general proposition he wanted the worker out only not to question the owners' autocratic power over his own bread but to give up his own basic demand of 'security of service'.

'The Congress has always helped you and will continue to help you, but the Congress cannot cooperate with you if violence is used. It will have to come to a parting of ways.' Cawnpore had demonstrated the strength of unity between Congress and labour. Nehru threatened to break it if violence was used by the workers, forgetting that it was the workers who had been fired at, it was not the workers but the owners' own paid agents and communalist provocateurs who were using or provoking violence while the workers and their leaders had successfully defeated their designs of instigating riots—communal and otherwise. Nehru's open letter encouraged the owners to believe that they could with impunity intensify their offensive against the workers and that if the workers moved into action their unity with the Congress would break. It further strengthened the Right Congress elements in making serious qualifications in the Congress support of labour.

The anti-working class Liberal daily, *The Leader*, on 27th September, under the Editorial 'Wholesome Advice' wrote: 'It is wholesome advice which Mr Jawaharlal Nehru has given to the Cawnpore labourers in his letter in the *Pratap*, and it may be hoped that the workers not only of Cawnpore but all over the country will benefit by it.'

Nehru is the intrepid leader of our United National Front and such a letter from him caused dismay among the workers and the Muslim League provocateur used it as ammunition against the Congress. When Nehru was to visit Cawnpore on the 25th September, the Reds participated in organizing welcome receptions for him and mobilized thousands of workers in mass meetings to hear him with the hope that direct contact with the mass of workers and their actual problems will make honest Nehru modify his stand. And he did so to some extent. In the meeting of mill committee members, after hearing the rank and file workers, he did concede that the workers were thoroughly justified in resorting to individual strikes in defence of the settlement but in open meetings he continued to counsel, in general terms, against sporadic strikes. He correctly propagated that organizational consolidation to achieve a successful realization of the proletarian demands

from the Enquiry Committee was the main task before the workers, but by a wrong emphasis he threw cold water on the militant enthusiasm of the workers and preached what was essentially Gandhism rather than Socialism to counteract their ideological primitiveness.

'He brought about a settlement in the Laxmi Rattan Cotton Mills where a strike had broken out on 18th September on the issue of victimization but this settlement was more observed in breach than in observance by the owners.

A Critical Period

The owners briefed the best Cawnpore lawyer to defend their case before the Judge to whom the cases of victimization arising out of the Cawnpore Cotton and Textile Mills strikes had been referred. The owners used all their resources to get a favourable decision. The Judge-bureaucrat in his decision sided with the owners and against the victimized workers. *This judgment became the basis for another challenging offensive by the owners.* The day for the Enquiry Committee was drawing near, something decisive had to be done before it.

In Elgin Mills 20 workers were dismissed under the convenient plea of indiscipline and the workers came out on strike on 21st October against the victimization of their brethren. On 26th October, workers of Cawnpore Cotton Mills came out on strike in defence of a victimized comrade. The Manager was willing to come to a settlement with the strike committee but the Employers' Association would not let him confirm the analysis which Yusuf had made of the employers policy. On 31st October, Employers' Association advised the City Congress Committee to cut itself away from the strikes and break off relations with the Mazdoor Sabha, and turned down the proposal of the local Congress leaders to have a Panchayat Board to settle the industrial disputes, under the Chairmanship of the Collector, consisting of two representatives each from the Congress Committee, Mazdoor Sabha and the Employers' Association.

A very critical situation arose in the end of October and first week of November. *Proletarian unity was simultaneously threatened from two sides at the very moment when the employers' second offensive of victimization had started and when the Meeting of the Enquiry Committee had come very near.* All this constituted a grave danger to the gains that had been realized so far rendering the future uncertain.

Communalist Provocation

Throughout October the communalists had been spreading out their tentacles and now they became bolder and bolder. When these last two strikes in Cawnpore Cotton and Elgin Mills began, Muslim League agents began demanding a general strike. On 31st October they called meeting of their 'Mazdoor Council' in which representatives from almost all the mill committees were present. They refused entry to the Red leader, R.D. Bharadwaj, who however directly appealed to the rank and file workers present for a democratic hearing. The Muslim League speakers took not a communal but a 'Left' stand, they attacked the Congress as a bourgeois organization which was inimical to the workers, attacked the Congress Ministry for doing nothing for the workers, and the Mazdoor Sabha as having betrayed the workers and gone over to the employers by opposing a general strike and seeking a settlement with Capitalism, and proposed the immediate declaration of a general strike. Bharadwaj's impassioned pleas for proletarian realism turned the scale and even in a hostile meeting he secured over 15 voted as against only two which were cast for immediate general strike.

Next day Babu Khan, the Muslim League worker, President of the Cawnpore Cotton Mill Committee, in a mass meeting, proposed for a general strike and the Red speakers opposed it as playing straight into the owners' hands and the workers after hearing both sides finally turned it down. Babu Khan, in anger, said, 'If you won't declare general strike, stop all individual strikes,

dissolve the Mill Committees.' This exactly was the owners' demand on the workers—'either let us crush you or you liquidate your strength'. The workers, once again, under the Red leadership, proved that they were in no mood to oblige their enemies.

On 2nd November the Muslim Leaguers again held a meeting of their Mazdoor Council, Yusuf went there against their wishes, and despite them, successfully got the resolution for a general strike defeated.

The Muslim Leaguers now giving up the hope to get the declaration of a general strike sanctioned even from their packed Committee, they now began to concentrate on 'developing' a general strike—more agents were introduced into the mills or to mix among the workers during the recess instigating strikes over every grievance. They did not want any representation through the Mazdoor Sabha.

Reformist Offensive Against the Mill Committee

The Pioneer had been ceaselessly egging on the reformists to fight the Reds, expel them out of the union and thus make the Mazdoor Sabha a 'genuine' Trade Union. The owners had made it widely known that their real objection to the recognition of the Mazdoor Sabha was the presence of the Reds in it, that they were willing to negotiate with the Shastris but not with Yusuf, that they did not want to crush the Mazdoor Sabha as such but the mill committees which were the source of all 'trouble'.

On 31st October the Mazdoor Sabha Executive by 15 votes to 7 passed a series of rules for the mill committees that they have no right to declare strikes without the previous sanction of the Mazdoor Sabha Executive, that all funds must be deposited in the Mazdoor Sabha (over and above the union dues which they used to collect and forward to the Head Office, they also collected one anna per month as mill committee subscription), that disciplinary action would be taken against the mill committees which failed to implement these rules. Yusuf moved that two representatives from each union be taken as members of the Executive. The Executive ruled that they could be present and participate in discussions but not vote.

The plan was well-laid out. It was already realized that the mill committees would resist these rules—they could thereafter be declared outside the pale of the Mazdoor Sabha with a stroke of the pen and handed over as good meat to the owners and the police. Yusuf as the General Secretary of the Union was to be made to circulate these rules under his own signature and enforce them. He would of course not consent to do this and he could then be at least forced to resign the general secretaryship of the Union if there was any hesitation in expelling Yusuf and his supporters for breach of discipline.

This Executive had been elected months before the general strike and its composition hardly reflected the temper and opinion of *its present* membership. Further, even at the time of the last annual general meeting of the Mazdoor Sabha there were serious protests against the way the elections were being manipulated but the Reds accepted the composition of the Executive only in the interests of trade union unity, to prevent the reformists splitting away from the union and start a rival one. If the Executive was unrepresentative of its membership, that did not prevent it from taking vital decisions, for reformist splitters are not known to be in love with Trade Union democracy. The National Congress admits the workers' unqualified right to strike but the Shastris would deny it even to an organized proletarian unit. By attempting to ban 'unofficial strikes' the Shastris were following the line of the worst brand of trade union bureaucrats—the Citrines and the Bevines. As a matter of fact it was the spontaneous stoppages of work, and these individual strikes which had forced the owners to put into practice the demands they had formally accepted in the settlement. But the Shastris were blind to all these. The Mill Committees were the greatest organizational

creation of the Cawnpore workers, they were the basic units of the Mazdoor Sabha itself, run by its own rank and file members. It was through the formation of active mill committees that the Mazdoor Sabha had found a solid base inside the factories, it was these very mill committees which had enrolled the thousands into the Mazdoor Sabha, they had made the Mazdoor Sabha a living fighting organization, a force in Cawnpore dreaded by the owners and the Imperialists alike. By creating a breach between the Mazdoor Sabha and the mill committees the reformists were striking at the very roots of the Mazdoor Sabha and reducing it to a top organization. The reformists are not the organizers of the masses but dread the masses. The Shastris were finding the new Mazdoor Sabha, with mill committees as its units 'unmanageable', and it was leading to their greater and greater isolation; they, therefore, did not want a *mass* Mazdoor Sabha but a pocket Mazdoor Sabha—without a mass membership, without the mill committees, without the Reds, with themselves as its leading office-bearers and a few hundreds as members who would not function but pay their dues and accept the Shastris as their accredited leaders. The Shastris wanted to go back upon history, their own domination over the Mazdoor Sabha was all that mattered and nothing else besides.

The communalist and the reformist, both began from the same point, and went different ways but met again. The communalist banked upon the militancy of the mass of workers, idealized their primitiveness and exploited it to provoke them into a premature clash with the enemy and get them crushed. The reformist feared the militancy of the workers, used their elemental primitiveness as a pretext for suppressing their initiative and banning their basic organization. The former worked from below—as provocateur; the latter from above—as a splitter. The former wanted the blood-letting of the proletariat, the latter to administer it a benumbing opiate. By splitting the ranks of the proletariat and liquidating its organized might, the communalist and the reformist alike led back the working class to pre-general strike days. What else could the owners desire? The danger to the workers became great because this dual offensive was launched simultaneously from two sides and had to be faced at the same time. The only way to successfully and promptly overcome these dangers was by making *mass appeals* to the entire proletariat on a very intensive scale. But this too had been rendered difficult.

Premier Pant Plays into the Owners Hands

Since the beginning of individual strikes, Sec. 144 had been proclaimed but it was hardly operative. On 6th November it was re-promulgated and enforced and the labour leaders were warned by the District Magistrate not to hold gate meetings.

Premier Pant paid his first official visit to Cawnpore on 10th November and the workers, under the leadership of the Reds, took a prominent part in organizing the demonstration of welcome.

The Red leaders demanded the withdrawal of Sec. 144 and he would not entertain the proposal. Not only that the general argument of the defence of civil rights did not appeal to him but also that the Muslim League provocation was not only directed against the Mazdoor Sabha but was meant to effect a breach between Congress and labour and pull down the Congress Ministry and the Muslim League menace could only be wiped out by awakening the entire mass of the workers to the danger and that in the technique of proletarian agitation this could only be achieved through holding endless gate-meetings. He considered that there was danger of communal riots if Sec. 144 was withdrawn and that after a campaign of gate-meetings there would be more 'indiscipline' inside the mills. He seemed to doubt the *bona fides* of the Reds and think that all these were specious arguments to get opportunities for preparing for a general strike and 'inconvenience' his Ministry. He obviously believed the police reports more than the words of his fellow fighters inside the National Front. He similarly refused to intervene in the two individual strikes that were

on, in defence of the very settlement which he had himself brought about, and suggested that they should be unconditionally withdrawn. Premier Pant took a 'stiff attitude' not against the local bureaucrats and the owners but the worker and thereby strengthened the elements inimical to the Congress Ministry.

Nehru Helps

Nehru came to Cawnpore again on 6th November and held consultations with the labour leaders and learnt at first hand of the critical situation. He agreed that the elected representatives of the mill committees should be considered full-fledged members of the executive of the Mazdoor Sabha. After some discussion he also agreed that the mill committees had an undoubted right to declare strikes but suggested that they should not do so on their own but put the proposal before the meeting of rank and file workers concerned for final decision and consult the Mazdoor Sabha as far as possible. The Reds readily agreed to this. The Shastris had no face to defend their proposal. The enforcement of the rules against the mill committees was stayed, unity of the Mazdoor Sabha was saved and a split in the working class averted for the time being at least.

After a previous close association with the situation Nehru, on 9th November, in a meeting of the members of the mill committees, spoke in an entirely different spirit than that disclosed in his last Letter to the Workers. It was more like the Nehru we know and love as the head of our National Front. He declared that Socialism was bound to replace Capitalism and the workers were the vanguard in freedom's battle. Formerly the workers were weak. After the general strike their strength increased and their enthusiasm grew. 'The owners decided to hamstring your increasing strength. They began to pick out active trade unionists for victimization. This increased your wrath. You had to oppose this and you rightly opposed it... The owners are not pleased over the appointment of the Enquiry Committee. They do not want to disclose their secrets. They want the conflicts to continue so that the Enquiry Committee may not be able to meet and that is why provocations continue. To strike is your right but you should exercise it after due consideration... You have been hasty in declaring strikes in the Elgin and Cawnpore Cotton Mills' (*Pratap*, 10/11).

The Enquiry Committee Meets: Owners Launch Another Offensive

On the day previous to the Enquiry Committee meeting the workers demonstrated 15 thousand strong, as visible mass forces behind the demands put before the Enquiry Committee and demanding the withdrawal of Sec. 144.

On 15th November the Enquiry Committee met and the workers took over another huge demonstration while their representatives demanded the Committee's intervention to settle the individual strikes that were on and create a proper atmosphere for the Enquiry. The Committee over-ruled the Employers' objection that the question of settling the dispute in the two mills was not within its terms of reference and recommended to the Government that in order to avoid delay in the normal work of the Committee another arbitration body be set up for settling the disputes. The owners considered this a serious defeat for themselves, saw the growing mobilization of the mass of workers behind the demands that were put on their behalf before the Enquiry Committee in a series of striking demonstrations, and that the strikers had not been starved into submission and their morale was unbroken, and their sense of discipline admirable. 'Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru paid a handsome tribute (in a meeting before the Allahabad students on 19/11) to the discipline and organization of Cawnpore workers during the recent strikes. He pointed out how two thousand mill hands carried out picketing of mills in batches of 2 or 3 with military precision to circumvent Sec. 144 which had been promulgated.' (*Advance*). The time factor was working against the owners and they decided upon a series of lightning blows to prevent the

functioning of the Enquiry Committee, provoke the workers into fury and create the preconditions for the police to intervene.

On 19/11 while Yusuf, the Red general secretary and Kapoor, the Red Joint Secretary of the Mazdoor Sabha, had gone to the Maheswari Jute Mill to settle a dispute there, they were attacked with lathis by the owners' hired goondas and the employers seized the opportunity to declare a lock-out.

On the same day, inside the Enquiry Committee, Sir T. Gavin Jones in answer to Bharadwaj's charge that the owners were not observing the terms of the settlement made this astounding declaration: 'It is not necessary to refer repeatedly to the settlement because the workers have broken the settlement several times; therefore so far as the owners are concerned the settlement is at an end, it is not binding upon us.' (*Pratap*)

On 14/11 the strikes in the Cawnpore Cotton Mill, Elgin and Maheshwari Jute mills were called off. The owners agreed to take back all the victimized workers except one each from the first two mills but from the very next day the owners started their pin-pricks again.

On 28/11 Mohd. Simi, a weaving master of Elgin Mills, was fatally injured by some unknown assailants. The President and Secretary of the Mazdoor Sabha exposed it as an act of hired hooligans and the act was condemned in a series of workers meetings.

On 29/11 the Employers' Association formally withdrew their recognition of the Mazdoor Sabha, 'as at present constituted.'

On 30/11, the District Magistrate gagged 14 Red leaders, almost the entire agitator-cadre, under sec. 144 CrPC. On 11/12, Yusuf, the Red General Secretary of the Mazdoor Sabha, was arrested under sec. 107 CrPC and on 2/12 Joglekar was also served with the gag order.

Up to the time of writing. (on 4/12) events have moved with dramatic rapidity and the Governor himself is present at Cawnpore. Is it he that is moving behind the scenes?

Prospects and Tasks

Early in November the Cawnpore Reds rose to the height of Bolshevik self-criticism when they came to the conclusion that the critical situation was a reflection of their own weakness—their failure to effect the organizational turn, their failure to branch out among the masses and dig deep roots inside the mill committees, their under-estimation in the importance of working up the Congress from below, the inability of young comrades to exercise individual initiative and shoulder responsibility for work in their respective centres.

During the month they began making the TURN and succeeded in defeating the communalist provocateurs, isolating the reformist splitters, forcing the owners to face the Enquiry committee at least and in creating mass sanctions behind the demands placed before the Committee by better day to day organizational work, by regular production of the Hindi and Urdu editions of the weekly *Lal Jhanda*, and by a series of huge mass demonstrations. The desperate means used by the various enemies of the proletariat, the lathi-blows, murder, gag-orders, and arrests—are evidence not of our waning but increasing strength. The owners and the bureaucracy have realized that the mass influence of the Reds over the workers cannot be undermined from below, and that the Reds, the builders of the unity of the working class, active champions of National United Front cannot be successfully combated politically in an open fight.

The gravest part of the situation, however, is the attitude of the Congress Ministry. Would it promptly pull up the local District Magistrate, and compel him, to restore civil liberties, withdraw the gag-orders and sec. 144 or acquiesce in this wanton attack on civil liberties, disgrace the name of the Congress—on whose behalf they hold office—before the proletarian masses, and seriously

damage the UNF? The Red leaders who have been so wantonly gagged have addressed a long letter to the Congress Premier in the course of which they say:

'We deem it our duty to convey it to you that in order to parry the blow aimed at the national and working class movement, and in order to assert our civil liberty, we will be compelled to break the orders served on us, if they are not speedily removed, and face the consequences of violating the "Imperialist Law".

The working class movement in Cawnpore is at a very critical stage. Workers for the first time have begun to strengthen their organization and demand their elementary rights. But this rising strength of the masses cannot be tolerated by anti-national and pro-imperialist elements. The employers have been deliberately following a policy of precipitating a general strike so as to beat down the workers completely.

The persons on whom notices have been served forbidding them from speaking, will not sit idle with their mouths sealed and see the working class movement disrupted by communalists and reactionaries. But as we do not want to take you by surprise, we ask you to compel those responsible for the orders to withdraw them or to declare that the Congress Ministry has nothing to do with them.'

It would be no easy task to make the Congress Ministry set up like a Peoples' Ministry; for Mahatma in the *Harijan* has already blessed the crusade against the Reds and disapproved of these extra-parliamentary mass struggles. Proletarian pressure alone is not likely to successfully move them unless it is combined with pressure from within the Congress organization itself and from the peasantry.

A period of storm and stress has begun in Cawnpore

The Cawnpore general strike marks a turning-point in our history like the Bombay general strike of 1928. The Bombay general strike became the beginning in our country of the independent class movement of the proletariat, the Cawnpore general strike has heralded the emergence of the proletariat as the builder of the UNF. Would the unity between the Congress and Labour achieved in Cawnpore, and preserved under the devoted care of the Reds, assume once again the reality of UNF in action—the entire people fighting in defence of the proletariat, demanding restoration of civil liberties and the elementary democratic right of a human wage for the workers. After the Cawnpore general strike, and inspired by it, large-scale strike actions have broken out in various other textile centres, Coimbatore, Madura, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Rajanandgaon and Dhariwal. The 3 lac Jute workers of Calcutta are seething with discontent. The occasion is ripe to link up all the Jute and cotton textile workers and together launch a nation-wide textile general strike. The Congress rank and file in increasing numbers is taking to the organization of the masses and participating in their partial struggles. It is not only possible but imperative to conduct this proletarian struggle as a united front struggle in alliance with the Congress organizations, creating in the localities concerned the United National Front of the people *in action* and thus give a nation-wide impetus to the movement to develop the National Congress, on a national-scale, into the UNF of the Indian people. Whether the Cawnpore proletarian immediately marches into action in defence of democratic rights or beats another retreat so that other textile centres may get time to line up and the unity with the Congress may be further developed, it is our task to see that CAWNPORE DOES NOT GO DOWN by redoubling our efforts in defence of Cawnpore and by ourselves following the path of UNF so brilliantly blazoned by the proletariat at Cawnpore.



79. Weekly Reviews of Labour Situation (Countrywide), January–December 1939, Department of Labour, Government of India
Home Poll. Sec., File Nos 12/1/39 to 12/3/39, NAI.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 1 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 12th January 1939

A-Strikes

1. Jute Mills in Barrackpore Sub-Division, 24 Parganas (Bengal).
The Empire and Tittaghur No. II mills started partial work on the 21st and 22nd December respectively. According to press reports all 6 mills, viz. Empire, Kinnison Nos. I and II, Kelvin and Tittaghur Nos. I and II have been working normally since about the 1st January.
2. The Kanailal Singh and Nadlal Adhikary's Iron Foundry, Howrah (Bengal).
The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 26th December.
3. The Indian Standard Wagon Company's Workshop, Asansol, Burdwan (Bengal).
32 strikers had resumed work by the 21st December. Many more strikers are willing to resume, but the management are not permitting them to do so.
4. The Bengal Paper Mill, Raniganj, Burdwan (Bengal).
105 strikers had resumed work by the 31st December. 294 new hands have been engaged. The strike continued.
5. Atta's Iron Foundry, Howrah (Bengal)
The strikers who had previously resumed work came out again on the 12th December and the factory has been closed.
6. The Cossipore Jute Press of Messrs George Honderson and Company, Narayanganj (Bengal).
It is now reported that 200 workers employed under a contractor struck for higher wages on the 26th November. A number of them resumed work subsequently and the rest were replaced by new hands.
7. Scavengers of Bhatpara Municipality, 24 Parganas (Bengal).
On an assurance being given by the Sub-Divisional Officer, Barrackpore, that he would hold an enquiry into the matter, all strikers resumed work on the 18th December.
8. Jute Press of Messrs M. David and Company, Narayanganj (Bengal).
100 Workers struck for higher wages on the 12th December.
9. The Bengal Glass Works, Dum Dum (Bengal).
All 130 workers struck on the 16th December for the payment of their arrear wages.
10. The Indian Patent Stone Company, Calcutta.
1,500 workers struck on the 27th December as a protest against the suspension of a co-worker on a charge of assaulting his supervisor. The strikers have also put forward a number of demands including higher wages, provident facilities and retiring gratuities, privilege leave with pay, regular payment and recognition of their union.
11. The Bata Shoe Factory, 24 Parganas (Bengal).
The dismissal of a worker and the transfer of another led to a stay-in-strike on the 4th January. The men, numbering 1500 were persuaded to leave the premises on the following day by the Assistant Labour Commissioner, who is endeavouring to promote an early settlement.

12. Collieries of Messrs Bird and Company, at Badroochak, Katras and Mudidih, Dhanbad (Bihar: Press Report).

Following a settlement all the strikers resumed work on the 27th December and the strike ended. The management have agreed to re-employ all except a few strikers. There will be no victimization and any genuine grievance brought to the notice of the authorities will be enquired into.

13. (1) The Kaleeswarar Mills and
(2) The A-Mill of the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills, Coimbatore (Madras).

On the refusal of their demand for the grant of a holiday with pay for a Hindu festival on the 5th January, a stay-in-strike was staged by the workers of the Kaleeswarar Mills on the 2nd January and by the workers of the other mills on the 3rd. 2,921 workers were involved. The mills closed on the 4th. A settlement was reached through the intervention of the Labour Commissioner. The Kaleeswarar Mills were to be re-opened on the 6th and the others on the 9th. The terms of settlement include the grant of holidays with pay, as before, until 1st June 1939 and the introduction thereafter of a system of granting 13 days leave with pay in all mills. Holidays given without pay may be exchanged for Sundays and will not be included in the 13 days.

14. The Curzon Tent Factory, Cawnpore (United Provinces).

210 workers struck on the 25th November 1938 as a protest against reduction in wages. The strike ended on the 5th December. The management agreed to restore the old rates, but notified that the reduced rates would be enforced from the 21st. The question has been taken up by the Labour Commissioner and his decision will be accepted by the parties.

15. The Narayan Cotton Mills, Cawnpore (United Provinces).

All 925 workers struck on the 29th November 1938 as a protest against the suspension of a weaver who had quarreled with the spinning master. The Labour Commissioner supported the action taken by the management and the strikers resumed work on the 5th December. The weaver has since apologized and has been reinstated.

B-General

16. The Chhoi Silk Mill Bombay, closed on the 26th December as a result of a fire. The Apollo Mill, Bombay, and the New Prahlad Mill, Bombay, closed certain departments with effect from the 26th and 31st December 1938, respectively, for trade reasons. The total number of hands affected is about 1,425.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 2 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 19th January 1939

A-Strikes

1. Jute Mills in Barrackpore Sub-Division 24 Parganas (Bengal).

The official report confirms the Press report. The result was not in favour of the workers.

2. The Indian Standard Wagon Company's Workshop, Asansol, Burdwan (Bengal).

The strike continued.

3. The Bengal Paper Mill, Raniganj, Burdwan (Bengal).

By the 5th January, 120 workers had resumed work, and 310 new hands were engaged. The strike continued.

4. Atta's Iron Foundry, Howrah (Bengal).

310 strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 4th January and on the 6th work was normal. Strikers, who left for their homes, will be re-engaged on their return.

5. The Indian Patent Stone Company, Calcutta.

All the strikers resumed work on the 6th January and the strike ended. The management withdrew their order of suspension against two workers and assured the strikers that their other grievances would be redressed. The Company will also withdraw the riot case.

6. The Bata Shoe Factory, 24 Parganas (Bengal).

The number of workers who stayed in is now said to be 1000. Their demands include higher wages, minimum wage of Rs 25 per mensem, reduction of rent for quarters, free medical aid and the recognition of their union. On the 9th January the godown and office staff who did not join the strike resumed work.

7. The Sone Valley Portland Cement Factory, at Japla, Palamau (Bihar).

1700 workers struck on the 4th January as a protest against the discharge of two workers and for the redress of certain other grievances. The labourers of the Baulia quarry belonging to the same Company struck on the next day in sympathy.

8. Collieries of Messrs Bird and Company at Badroochak, Katras and Mudidih, Dhanbad (Bihar).

The Official report confirms the press report of the termination of the strikes.

9. The Indian Cable Company at Jamshedpur (Bihar).

All the strikers resumed work on the 2nd January as a result of a settlement reached on the 31st December.

10. The Chanch Colliery of the Bengal Coal Company, Dhanbad (Bihar).

550 miners are reported to be working at present including 60 strikers. The Strike continued.

11. The Harinagar Sugar Mills, Champaran (Bihar).

The strike was called off on the 5th January following the appointment of 3 arbitrators.

12. Embroidery machine workers at Amritsar, Punjab.

200 workers, employed by 40 small factories on piece work system, struck on the 6th January as a protest against a reduction in rates. The strike was called off on the 9th when the owners agreed to restore the old rates.

13. Nawal Kishore Press, Hazratganj, Lucknow (United Provinces).

The workers submitted 21 demands, which included the recognition of their union, increase in wages, abolition of contract system, minimum wage of Rs 30 per mensem, 15 days' annual leave with pay and introduction of a provident fund system. They warned the proprietor that, if their demands were not accepted by the 15th December, they would strike on the following day. The proprietor, anticipating trouble, declared a lock-out on the 15th. 400 workers were involved. The lock-out continued.

B-General

14. The Bombay Cotton Mill, Bombay, closed 211 looms from the 1st January 1939 for trade reasons. The Standard Mill, Bombay, on the other hand, engaged 400 additional men in their weaving shed.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 3 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 26th January 1939

A-Strikes

1. The Indian Standard Wagon Company's Workshop, Asansol, Burdwan (Bengal).
By the 11th January 225 men had resumed work. The management are averse to permitting any others to resume.
2. The Bengal Paper Mill, Raniganj, Burdwan (Bengal).
248 strikers resumed work by the 12th January. The management intend not to re-employ a number of workers on account of their undesirable activities.
3. The Bata Shoe Factory, 24 Parganas (Bengal).
Following a settlement, work was resumed on the 19th January. The terms of the settlement include non-victimization, reduction of rent for workers' quarters from five annas to three annas a week, free medical aid to all workers drawing not more than seven rupees a week and introduction of a provident fund system. The Company have also agreed to re-appoint retrenched hands in future vacancies and to grant certain gratuitous relief to workers who are thrown out of employment when the night shift is abolished.
4. The Bengal Glass Works, Dum Dum (Bengal).
The factory has been closed and will not be re-opened for sometime on account of financial difficulties. The strike may be considered to have ended.
5. Angelo Brothers' Shellac Factory, Cossipore (Bengal).
All strikers have been reinstated except 81, of whom 41 were dismissed and the remainder did not turn up for work.
6. (1) The Jute assorters of G and M Fogt Company, Limited, Narayanganj Dacca (Bengal).
(2) The Jute as sorters of the Narayanganj Company Limited, Dacca (Bengal).
The strikers resumed work on the 22nd December. The companies granted an increase of 9 pies per bale.
7. Bengal Hosiery Workers (Bengal).
In pursuance of the decision of the Bengal Hosiery Workers' Union to call a general strike in support of various demands, including the discontinuance of the existing practice of selling hosiery cloth at uniform rates in all factories, an eight hour day, permanency of service and recognition of the union, 610 workers, employed in 31 factories in Howrah and Calcutta, have been on strike from different dates, the earliest being the 10th January. Most of the factories affected are very small.
8. Conch Bangle makers of Dacca (Bengal).
150 workers struck on the 13th December for higher wages. The demand was partially conceded, and the men resumed work on the 18th.
9. The Chalisgaon Shri Laxmi Narayan Mill, Chalisgaon (Bombay).
102 operatives of the spinning department struck on the 13th January for the abolition of the two-sides system of working ring frames. 400 looms had to be stopped for want of yarn. The management, apprehending trouble, closed the mill on the 15th. 1081 workers were affected. The strike continued.
10. (1) The Kaleeswarar Mills and
(2) The A-Mill of the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills, Coimbatore (Madras).
The former mills re-opened on the 6th January, and the latter on the 9th, in accordance with the terms of the settlement.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 4 of 1939, summarizing information
received during the week ending the 2nd February 1939

A-Strikes

1. Longsoal Tea Estate, Assam Frontier Tea Company Dibrugarh District, Lakhimpur (Assam).
3,432 workers struck on the 11th January for special enhanced rates of pay as granted for 4 months in the cold weather in the neighbouring gardens. Their other grievances related to the allotment of tasks and the proposed removal of 4 persons who were creating trouble. Work was resumed on the 14th on an assurance being given that duties would be reassigned and that the four persons would be allowed to remain in the garden.
2. The Indian Standard Wagon Company's Workshop, Asansol, Burdwan (Bengal).
388 strikers had resumed work by the 17th January. Many strikers have been refused permission to resume work.
3. The Bengal Paper Mill, Raniganj, Burdwan (Bengal).
The strike continued.
4. The Bata Shoe Factory, 24 Parganas (Bengal).
The management have announced a compensatory allowance of Rs 4 for each of the 270 workers discharged on the discontinuance of the night shift.
5. Bengal Hosiery Workers (Bengal).
The strikers in 7 factories at Calcutta resumed work unconditionally between the 14th and the 18th January. In the Howrah area, 2 factories have been working partially since the commencement of the strike and 2 others since the 21st January. According to a press report the strike was called off at a meeting of the strikers held on the 22nd January, the majority of the factory owners having agreed to concede the strikers' demands in full.
6. (1) The Sone Valley Portland Cement Factory at Japla, Palamau (Bihar).
(2) The Baulia Quarry, Shahabad (Bihar).
The strikes continued.
7. The Gaya Cotton and Jute Mills, Gaya (Bihar).
214 workers struck on the 31st December as a protest against the discharge of 50 apprentices and an alleged assault on an apprentice, who went on hunger strike. On the 2nd January the mill started work with 1400 workers despite vigorous picketing, but as a result of looting of food supplies the management declared a lock-out on the 3rd. 1600 hands were affected. Following a settlement reached on the 7th, work was resumed on the 9th. The terms of settlement provided for the appointment of a Settlement Committee, whose decision would be binding on the parties concerned, a minimum wage of Rs 12 per mensem, a stipend of Rs 5 per mensem for each apprentice, better housing conditions, medical aid and leave facilities, free primary education for workers' children, security of service and introduction of a provident fund system if approved by Government.
8. The Chalisgaon Shri Narayan Mill, Chalisgaon (Bombay).
Following a settlement reached on the 23rd January, the mill re-opened on the 25th when all strikers resumed work. The workers have been given the option to work on single side or double side. The strike ended.
9. Richardson and Cruddas Workshop, Royapuram (Madras).
120 workers struck on the 25th January. The strikers demand that 36 workers who have been played off for trade reasons should be given work on a rotatory system to be

devised by the management, but the latter are only willing to re-employ them in leave vacancies, to which the workers do not agree.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 5 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 9th February 1939

A-Strikes

1. The Indian Standard Wagon Company's Workshop, Asansol (Bengal).
The strike continued.
2. The Bengal Paper Mill, Raniganj, Burdwan (Bengal).
Up to the 24th January, 546 strikers had resumed work and 442 new hands were appointed. The strike continued.
3. Bengal Hosiery Workers (Bengal).
50 strikers employed in different factories in the Calcutta area resumed work on the 23rd January. In the Howrah area 2 more factories have been working partially since the 28th January and another since the 30th.
4. The Chanch Colliery of the Bengal Coal Company, Dhanbad (Bihar).
The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 17th January 1939.
5. Richardson and Cruddas Workshop, Royapuram (Madras).
600 workers employed in 8 other factories struck in sympathy on the 1st February, but resumed work on the following day. The strike continued.
6. The Chalisgaon Shri Narayan Mills, Chalisgaon (Bombay)
A later report indicates that only 1064 workers were affected by the strike.
7. The Gold Mohur Mill, Bombay, closed certain departments for trade reasons. 175 hands are affected.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 6 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 16th February 1939

A-Strikes

1. The Indian Standard Wagon Company's Workshop, Asansol (Bengal).
The strike continued.
2. The Bengal Paper Mill, Raniganj, Burdwan (Bengal).
A large number of workers offered themselves for work but only 150 were admitted on the 30th December 1938 and a slightly higher number on the following day. The management do not require further hands for the present but have opened a waiting list.
3. Bengal Hosiery Workers (Bengal).
In the Calcutta area all the factories except one are working normally.
4. The Indian Patent Stone Company, Calcutta.
It is now reported that the strikers resumed work unconditionally after apologizing for their conduct.
5. Eastern Light Casting Company, Kulti (Bengal).
120 moulders staged a stay-in-strike on the 30th January over a dispute concerning wages. They complained of low wages, false entries in their outturn register and under-payment. 40 workers of the Rammer Section joined the strike on the 3rd February.

6. The New Central Jute Mill, Howrah (Bengal).

Owing to the refusal of their request for the payment of their wages earlier than usual, on account of the Id festival, 2950 workers struck on the 31st January and the mill closed. Work was resumed unconditionally on the 6th February.

7. The Radha Kissen Cotton Mill, No. II, Howrah (Bengal).

The mill which had been closed from November last re-started work on the 4th February with 654 workers all of whom had to sign a bond for good behaviour. As a protest against this and the introduction of a new scale of reduced wages, 327 workers struck on the 6th and the mill had to be closed again.

8. The Indian Cable Company at Jamshedpur (Bihar).

The settlement reached on the 31st December 1937 provided that a Conciliation Board should be appointed.

9. Richardson and Cruddas Workshop, Royapuram (Madras).

The management agreed to re-employ workers who had been played off, and to introduce, as an experimental measure for six months, a shift system to provide work for all. 58 strikers thereupon resumed work on the 6th February. 77 other strikers will resume work on their release from jail. 60 new hands, who had been engaged by the management during the strike period, were discharged.

10. Diocesan Press, Vepery, Madras.

All 306 workers struck on the 31st January as a protest against the engagement of new hands and the refusal of the management to re-employ workers discharged for reasons which the Court of Enquiry held to be insufficient. The Press closed on the 2nd February. The strike continued.

11. (1) The Dhanalakshmi Mills Limited and

(2) The S.R.C. Mills Limited, Tirupur (Madras).

702 workers struck on the 6th February as a protest against the refusal of the management to re-employ workers who had been discharged following the stoppage of the night shifts. By the 9th the number on strike rose to 1508. The managements of both mills in consequence declared a lock-out from the 10th. 1551 workers are involved.

12. Stevedore Companies, Cocanada Town, Vizagapatam District (Madras).

600 workers struck on the 31st January following the refusal of the Companies to comply with their demands relating to wages and rations, composition of working gangs, intervals for meals and recognition of their union. Workers from neighbouring places have been engaged in place of the strikers.

13. Associated Printers, Mount Road, Madras.

On the 7th February 240 workers refused to do work of a confidential nature, which they believed to have been transferred from the Diocesan Press, where a strike followed by a lock-out is in progress. The strikers resumed work on the 10th, after an assurance had been given by the Hon'ble Minister for Labour that he had seen evidence proving that the work had come direct from the customer.

14. The Ghorpuri Goods Shed (GIP Railway), Ghorpuri, Poona District (Bombay).

120 out of 191 porters, engaged temporarily for the busy season, struck on the 4th January for the grant of the day's rest every 7 days allowed to permanent porters, instead of 24 hours' rest every fourteen days. Work was resumed unconditionally on the 14th January.

15. Barakhai Tea Estate, Cachar District (Assam).

As a protest against the treatment of the head clerk and his son, who is in charge of outdoor work, all 350 workers struck on the 18th December 1938 and demanded their dismissal. They resumed work unconditionally on the 22nd December. The two members of the staff were warned.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 7 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 23rd February 1939

A-Strikes

1. The Indian Standard Wagon Company's Workshop, Asansol (Bengal).

The strike is believed to have ended.

2. The Bengal Paper Mill, Raniganj (Bengal).

As 1500 hands had been engaged by the end of the month, the strike may be considered to have ended. 200 strikers are still seeking work.

3. Bengal Hosiery Workers (Bengal).

2 more factories in the Howrah area have been working normally since the 11th February. The strike was a failure.

4. Eastern Light Casting Company, Kulti (Bengal).

The management issued a notice that strikers who failed to return by the 8th February would be dismissed, as a result of which work was resumed unconditionally on the 7th.

5. The Radha Kissen Cotton Mill, No. II, Howrah (Bengal).

The mill closed on the 7th February (not on the 6th as previously reported).

6. The Calcutta Tramway Workers.

350 workers of the road repairing gang struck on the 14th February as a protest against the discharge of 45 men as a measure of retrenchment.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 8 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 2nd March 1939

A-Strikes

1. The Indian Standard Wagon Company's Workshop, Asansol (Bengal).

1000 strikers had resumed work unconditionally by the 2nd February and the factory has been working normally since that date. The strike has ended.

2. The Radha Kissen Cotton Mill No. II, Howrah (Bengal).

The mill continued to be closed.

3. The Calcutta Tramway Workers.

The strike continued.

4. Diocesan Press, Vepery, Madras.

The strike continued.

5. (1) The Dhanalakshmi Mills, Limited, and
(2) The S.R.C. Mills, Limited, Tirupur (Madras).

The lock-outs continued.

6. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company, Vizagapatam District (Madras).

2000 operatives staged a stay-in-strike on the 14th February demanding the reinstatement of weaver who had been dismissed for refusing to leave his loom on his reversion from

acting piece-rate weaver to his permanent post as daily-rate weaver. The strikers became obstreperous and were finally ejected by the Police.

7. Nawal Kishore Press, Hazratganj, Lucknow (United Provinces).

The strike ended on the 4th February. Workers will not be paid for the period of lock-out, and about 100 who have become surplus will be retrenched. These are however to be paid 15 days' wages, and will be re-employed as and when vacancies occur.

8. The Dhanraj Mill, Bombay.

On the 16th February, 404 weavers struck for revision of wage rates. On the 20th the management put up a notice to the effect that strikers who had not resumed work by the 22nd would be dismissed. Representatives of both parties were invited to appear at the Court of the Chief (Conciliator on the 22nd, but the workers' representatives absented themselves as a protest against the dispersal of their procession to the Court by police force. The management's representatives explained to the Court that the wage rates of weavers were those fixed in the Court of the Chief Conciliator, in January 1938. The strike continued.

9. The Daulatram Dyeing and Bleaching Mills, Bombay.

225 workers struck on the 19th February as a protest against the discharge of 3 workers who were suspected of disseminating disaffection. On the 22nd the management notified the dismissal of 17 strikers and a deduction of 8 days' wages from their pay for breach of contract. The notice further stated that 8 days' wages would be deducted from the pay of any others who did not resume work on the following day. The strike continued.

B-General

10. The Colaba Land and Mill and the Jacob Sasscon Mill, Bombay, closed their night shifts from the 16th February, 2600 are affected.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 9 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 9th March 1939

A-Strikes

1. The Calcutta Tramway Workers.

The strike continued. The number on strike is now reported to be 300.

2. The Calcutta Jute Manufacturing Company's Factory, Calcutta.

550 weavers struck on the 23rd February as a protest against an assault on one of the workers by a factory official for neglect of duty. The strikers resumed work on the 27th unconditionally.

3. The Workshop of Saxby and Farmer Company Limited, Calcutta (Press Report).

580 workers staged a stay-in-strike on the 1st March as a protest against the alleged wrongful dismissal of 9 workers. Their other grievances related to retrenchment of workers, reduction of wage-rates and ill-treatment. An attempt made by the Assistant Labour Commissioner at conciliation failed. 20 workers have so far quitted the factory.

4. Diocesan Press, Vepery, Madras.

The Premier and Labour Minister of Madras negotiated a settlement, as a result of which the management agreed to re-employ the discharged workers. The Press worked on the 1st March with 41 workers and on the 2nd with 242, including the discharged hands. The strike ended.

5. (1) The Dhanalakshmi Mills and
(2) The S.R.C. Mills, Tirupur (Madras)
The lock-outs continued.
6. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company, Vizagapatam District (Madras).
The strike continued.
7. Choolai Mills (Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills Company) Choolai, Madras.
All 2150 workers struck on the 23rd February, alleging that the six demands of the Union, for which they had observed a stay-in-strike on the 9th February, had not been conceded by the management. The mills closed the same day. The strike continued.
8. The Madras Publishing House, Madras.
On the 23rd February all 150 workers staged a stay-in-strike, immediately following the refusal by a worker, who had been dismissed for insubordination, to accept 15 days' wages in lieu of notice. The strikers vacated the premises on the same day.
9. Stevedore Companies, Cocanada.
The strike ended on the 18th February. The Companies have agreed to increase the rates of wages and the quality of free rations.
10. R.G. Cotton Mills. Lucknow (United Provinces).
Nearly all 1042 workers struck on the 11th February, demanding the dismissal of a weaving master and a mistri. Their other grievances related to payment of wages on the scale fixed in 1936 and prompt payment of arrears. The strike continued.
11. Luayui Tea Estate, Sylhet District (Assam).
About 350 workers struck on the 23rd January for minimum rates of wages under an Act they were told existed. The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 26th, on an explanation from a magistrate.
12. The Dhanraj Mill, Bombay.
The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 27th February.
13. The Daulatram Dyeing and Bleaching Mills, Bombay.
The strikers resumed work on the 1st March. The management agreed to reinstate one of the three discharged workers and to withdraw the notice of discharge served on 17 others.
14. The Victoria Mill No. 2, Bombay,
On the 24th February 425 weavers struck complaining of low wages and demanding an increase in rates. On the following day the management notified the strikers that, as they had struck without notice, they would be dismissed, if they did not resume work on the 27th. A promise was given that the question of increasing the rates for certain qualities of cloth would be considered and all strikers resumed work on the 27th.
15. Barsi Spinning and Weaving Mills, Bombay.
On the 27th February about 100 workers of the night shift requested the Manager to change the date of the Muharram holiday from the 2nd March to the 1st, or to give them continuous 18 hours' work from the night of the 28th February, so that they should be free on the night of the 1st, The Manager called the Head Jobber to discuss the matter, and asked him to bring with him a worker who had been insolent. The worker at once left the mill with those working in the same Department, and the workers of other departments followed. The mill closed. 1262 workers are involved.
16. The Khatav Makanji Mill, Bombay, have partially discontinued night shift in the Weaving Department from 25th February. This has affected about 250 men.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 10 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 16th March 1939

A-Strikes

1. The Calcutta Tramway Workers (Press report).

The strike was called off about the 7th March following a settlement by the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation. The terms of the settlement included re-employment within 3 weeks of the discharged permanent way staff and the further consideration of the cases of dismissed workers of the Tollygunj Depot. The Chief Executive Officer assured the strikers that he would endeavour to secure withdrawal of the criminal cases instituted against them.

2. Bengal Hosiery Workers (Bengal).

It is now learnt that 2 factories in the Howrah area, which closed in February in apprehension of a strike, are still closed.

3. The Radha Kissen Cotton Mill No. II, Howrah (Bengal).

389 strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 14th February and 211 more on the 16th.

4. Workshop of Saxby and Farmer Company, Calcutta.

The number of stay-in strikers had fallen to 500 by the 4th March. The strike continued.

5. Rickshaw coolies in Calcutta.

200 rickshaw coolies struck on the 4th march as a protest against an increase from 7 to 10 annas in the daily rate payable to their employers.

6. R.G. Cotton Mills, Lucknow (United Provinces).

The strike ended in a settlement on the 19th February. Strikers will not be victimized and the weaving and the spinning departments will start work on the 20th and 21st respectively. The Labour Officer will hold an enquiry into the grievances behind the strike, and adjudicate on the charges brought against 60 workers, 13 of whom will not be re-employed for the present.

7. The Chalisgaon Shri Laxmi Narayan Mill, Chalisgaon (Bombay).

Operative of the Ring Frame Department staged a stay-in strike on the 16th February for the abolition of the double side system. 600 looms were stopped. The 17th was a holiday and the mill closed on the 18th. 1,082 hands were affected. On the 9th March, the management notified the dismissal of 35 workers and re-opened the mill, but only 260 persons resumed work. The strike continued.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 11 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 23rd March 1939

A-Strikes

1. The Calcutta Tramway Workers.

The official report confirms the press report. The strikers resumed work on the 8th March.

2. Bengal Hosiery Workers (Bengal).

Of the two factories in the Howrah area which closed in February one re-started work on the 6th March under new management.

3. The Workshop of Saxby and Farmer Company Limited, Calcutta.

The strike continued.

4. Rickshaw coolies in Calcutta.

The number of strikers rose to 800 by the 7th March, but fell on the following day, when the strikers in Bhowanipore resumed work after the owners had agreed to their demands. Further resumptions took place on the 10th.

5. The Victoria Cotton Mills, Howrah (Bengal).

30 spinners struck on the 1st March as a protest against the dismissal of a sirdar and the introduction of piece-rates resulting in smaller earnings. The number of strikers subsequently rose to 338 and the mills had to be closed.

6. Engineering Workshop of Purshottam Ramji, Alipore (Bengal).

125 workers struck on the 1st March as a protest against the introduction of a service bond. The workshop closed on the 3rd. As a result of the intervention of the Assistant Labour Commissioner, the management agreed to make certain modification in the bond which were accepted by the strikers. Work is expected to be re-started soon.

7. Shoe-makers of Calcutta.

100 cobblers and shoe-makers of Jorasanko and Moohuabazar struck on the 6th March for higher wages, an 8-hour working day and holidays on Sundays.

8. Rupnarain Rice Mill, Midnapore (Bengal).

100 workers struck about the end of February for higher wages.

9. The Radha Kissen Cotton Mill (Bengal).

192 workers staged a stay-in-strike on the 13th March for higher wages. The mill was closed. 896 workers are affected.

10. Kumardhubi Engineering Works of Messrs, Bird and Company, Dhanbad (Bihar).

80 female workers struck on the 31st January as a protest against the introduction of the 'Kauri' system to check outturn. The system was withdrawn and the management expressed their willingness to readmit all strikers to work, but the strikers persisted in demanding a settlement through the local union. Other departments had to be closed, and 700 workers found themselves out of work.

11. (1) The Sone Valley Portland Cement Company at Japla, Palamau (Bihar) and
(2) The Baulia Quarry, Shahabad (Bihar).

The strikers were called off on the 30th January. The parties agreed to the appointment of a Conciliation Board.

12. (1) The Dhanalakshmi Mills and
(2) The S.R.C. Mills, Tirupur (Madras).

The lock-outs continued.

13. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam District (Madras).

The strike continued.

14. The Choolai Mills (Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills Company), Choolai (Madras).

The Provincial Government have issued a press communiqué detailing the steps taken by Government towards settlement of the dispute and deprecating the strike in spite of all that Government have done in the matter. The strike continued.

15. The Madras Publishing House, Madras.

The strike continued.

16. The Ganges Canal at Juhi Khurd (United Provinces).

210 workers struck on the 12th January for the payment of wages for periods when boats were not plying and increase of wages from six annas to eight annas a trip. The

strike ended on the 2nd February. The owners agreed to pay six annas a day, irrespective of whether boats plied or not.

17. The Chalisgaon Shri Laxmi Narayan Mill, Chalisgaon (Bombay).

The strikers are also demanding the unconditional re-instatement of 35 dismissed workers, an increase in the wages of cobblers and the appointment of departmental committees for the ventilation of their grievances. The strike continued.

18. The Khatau Makanji Mill, Bombay.

All 750 weavers on day shift staged a stay-in-strike on the 14th March as a protest against the notices of discharge served on 285 weavers as a measure of retrenchment. The night shift weavers joined them and the mill had to be closed. 4450 workers were affected. On the following day the management referred the disputes to the Chief Conciliator, but the strikers refused to attend the conciliation proceedings. At a meeting of 500 strikers a list of 14 demands was formulated. The management put up a notice stating that strikers who had not resumed work by the 18th March would be dismissed. The strike continued.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 12 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 30th March 1939

A-Strikes

1. Bengal Hosiery Workers (Bengal).

Two factories, one at Howrah and the other at Calcutta, are still closed.

2. The Workshop of Saxby and Farmer Company Limited, Calcutta.

Work was resumed on the 17th March. The terms of the settlement provide that dismissed workers will be reinstated, no strikers will be victimized and that a committee of 10 representatives will be set up, who will be consulted in future in the matter of fining and dismissal.

3. Engineering Workshop of Purshottam Ramji, Alipore (Bengal).

The strike ended on the 12th March when 124 workers resumed work.

4. Shoe-makers of Calcutta.

The strike ended on the 15th March. 13 strikers were re-employed and the rest were replaced by new hands.

5. Rupnarain Rice Mill, Midnapore (Bengal).

Work was resumed on the 11th March following a settlement. The terms of the settlement are awaited.

6. The Radha Kissen Cotton Mill No. II, Howrah (Bengal).

The number of strikers staying in fell to 80 by the 22nd March. The strike continued.

7. The Union South Jute Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).

550 operatives struck on the 8th March demanding that half of the mill *durwans* should be Muhammadans. 3127 other workers were indirectly affected. The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 16th March.

8. The Lodna-Bhaga Collieries of Messrs, Lodna Colliery Company, Limited, Dhanbad (Bihar).

5,000 workers struck on the 21st March as a protest against the discharge of 20 workers, who were regarded as surplus.

9. (1) The Dhanalakshmi Mills and
(2) The S.R.C. Mills, Tirupur (Madras).

As a result of a discussion, at which the Minister for Labour was present, a settlement was reached between the management of the mills and the Coimbatore District Textile Workers' Union. The main terms of the settlement are (1) re-employment of all strikers and retrenched workers, (2) provision of work for all, for not less than 35 hours a week and (3) re-opening of the mills on the 20th March.

10. The Chittivalsa Jute Mill Company, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam District (Madras).

The strike continued.

11. The Choolai Mills (Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills Company), Choolai, Madras.

The strike continued.

12. The Madras Publishing House, Madras.

The Management had decided to engage outsiders in place of strikers who and not resumed work by the 16th March. The strike continued.

13. Sri Meenakshi Mills, Madura (Madras).

The refusal of the management to recognize the Madura Labour Union as representing the workers of the mills and to consider the grievances of the workers put forward by the Union led to a strike of 200 workers on the 10th March. By the 17th the number on strike was 800.

14. The Commonwealth Weaving Factory, Cannanore (Madras).

Following a notice given by the workers' union that the workers would go on strike, if their demands relating to recognition of the union, increase of wages, casual leave with pay and bonus were not acceded to, the management closed that factory on the 23rd February. Through the intervention of the Labour Commissioner a settlement was reached, the main terms of which were (1) no increase in wages, (2) grant of 6 days casual leave and 7 days sick leave in the year without pay and (3) recognition of the union. The factory re-opened on the 13th March, but closed again on the following day in view of the insubordinate behaviour of certain workers.

15. The Kesar Sugar Works Limited, Baheri, Bareilly District (United Provinces).

372 workers struck on the 23rd December 1938 for the replacement of the Chief Engineer of the factory. The strike ended on the 28th December. The terms of the settlement included the formation of a conciliation committee for the settlement of disputes, recognition of the workers' union and non-victimization of strikers.

16. West India Match Company, Limited, Bareilly (United Provinces).

903 workers struck on the 23rd December 1938 for an increase in wages. They decided to resume work unconditionally, but the management granted an increase of one anna a day. The strike ended on the 3rd January.

17. R.G. Cotton Mills, Lucknow (UP).

The workers in the weaving department struck on the 11th March demanding that the 12 (not 13) workers whose cases had been referred to the Labour Officer for adjudication should be re-employed before his decision was given. The mill had to be closed. 1042 persons were affected. On the re-opening of the mill on the 12th all workers with the exception of 100 of the weaving department resumed work. On the 14th the management re-employed 60 of the latter who had apologized for their behaviour. The remaining 40 had not done so and had left for their homes. On the findings of the Labour Commissioner 6 of the 12 suspended workers were taken back and the remaining 6 were dismissed.

18. Balarampur Sugar Mills, Balarampur, Gonda District (United Provinces).
502 workers struck on the 16th January for an increase in wages and other amenities. The strike ended on the 31st January. The management revised the terms of employment and those strikers who offered apologies and accepted the new terms, were re-employed, and the rest were replaced by new hands.
19. The Chalisgaon Shri Laxmi Narayan Mill, Chalisgaon (Bombay).
The strike continued.
20. The Khatau Makanji Mill, Bombay.
At a meeting of the strikers held on the 20th March it was announced that the owner had assured the strike committee that, if the strikers resumed work, there would be no victimization, and that retrenched workers would be given re-employment when trade improved. All strikers resumed work unconditionally on the following day and the strike ended.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 13 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 6th April 1939

A-Strikes

1. Rickshaw coolies in Calcutta.
700 strikers had resumed work by the 10th March.
2. The Radha Kissen Cotton Mill No. II, Howrah (Bengal).
The remainder of the stay-in-strikers came out on the 24th March, on an assurance from the management that their grievances would be considered. Negotiations for a settlement have been resumed.
3. The Chittivalsa Jute Mill Company, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam District (Madras).
The strike continued.
4. The Choolai Mills (Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills Limited), Choolai (Madras).
The strike continued.
5. The Madras Publishing House, Madras.
The management have decided to suspend work for the present.
6. The Sri Meenakshi Mills, Madura (Madras).
The strike continued.
7. The Commonwealth Weaving Factory, Cannanore (Madras).
The factory was to re-open on the 24th March.
8. The Kaleeswarar Mills, Coimbatore (Madras).
All 2200 workers staged a stay-in-strike on the 17th March, as a protest against the dismissal of certain workers for misbehaviour. The management declared a lock-out on the following day. A settlement has been reached, the terms of which provide for the re-employment of all workers except three. The cases of two of them will, with the question of the method of payment of wages to women workers, be referred for decision to an officer to be appointed by the provincial Government. Workers had been given till the 27th March to resume works.
9. The Chalisgaon Shri Laxminarayan Mill, Chalisgaon (Bombay).
The strike continued.

10. The Dun Aluminium Factory, Bombay.

23 workers struck on the 23rd March for higher wages, and were joined on the 27th by the remaining 577. The strike continued.

11. The Barsi Spinning and Weaving Mill, Barsi (Bombay).

All 478 workers on night shift struck on the 24th March following an altercation between the spinning master and a worker. The proposed closing of the night shift from the 1st April was another cause for discontentment. On the following day the management put up a notice dismissing the night shift workers for striking without cause, and announcing the discontinuance of the night shift for an indefinite period. As there was no picketing on the 27th the strike was treated as having terminated on that date.

B-General

12. The management of the Khatau Makanji Mill Bombay, discharged 250 weavers from 27th March, when some of the looms were idle.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 14 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 13th April 1939

A-Strikes

1. The Victoria Cotton Mills, Howrah (Bengal).

Work was re-started on the 30th March with 105 hands. The management intended to increase the number of workers gradually to the normal strength of 357.

2. Rupnarain Rice Mill, Midnapore (Bengal).

It is since reported that the strike had spread to 6 other rice mills in the same area and that these strikers had also resumed work on the 11th March.

3. The Radha Kissen Cotton Mill No. II, Howrah (Bengal).

The mill re-started work on the 2nd April with 786 hands who were granted increments varying from 31/2 to 41/4 pies per pick of 100 yards. The strike ended.

4. The Dhakeshwari Cotton Mill, No. II, Dacca (Bengal).

300 workers struck on the 22nd March for an increase in wages and the redress of certain other grievances.

5. The Iron and Steel Company's workshop Pipe Foundry No. II, Kulti, Burdwan (Bengal).

680 workers staged a stay-in-strike on the 31st March as a protest against the transfer of 60 workers to another section owing to shortage of work.

6. Kumardhubi Engineering Works of Messrs Bird and Company, Dhanbad (Bihar).

Work in the Foundry, Furnace and Pottery departments is being carried on with 267 men including 12 strikers who had resumed work. The strike continued.

7. (1) The Dhanalakshmi Mills and

(2) The S.R.C. Mills, Tirupur (Madras).

The mills re-opened on 20th March and the strike ended.

8. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam District (Madras).

The strike continued.

9. The Choolai Mills (Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills Limited), Choolai (Madras).

The strike continued.

10. The Madras Publishing House, Madras.
The Press closed on the 25th March. The strike continued.
11. The Sri Meenakshi Mills, Madura (Madras).
With the agreement of the parties the dispute has been referred to a Court of Enquiry. The strike continued.
12. The Commonwealth Weaving Factory, Cannanore (Madras).
The strike ended on the 24th March when the factory resumed work. The management have suspended 6 workers for six weeks and 2 for two weeks.
13. The Kaleeswarar Mills, Coimbatore (Madras).
The strike ended on the 24th March when all the strikers resumed work. The Inspector of Factories, Coimbatore has been instructed to investigate the two outstanding points and to report to the Labour Commissioner for his final decision.
14. Weavers at Khamaria, Mirzapur District (United Provinces).
200 workers struck on the 7th February for the grant of commission on production. The employer accepted their request and all the strikers resumed work on the 23rd. The strike ended.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 15 of 1939, summarizing Information received during the week ending the 20th April 1939

A-Strikes

1. Bengal Hosiery Workers (Bengal).
The factory at Calcutta restarted work with all the old workers who agreed to accept a reduction of 25 per cent, in wages to start with on the assurance that the rates would be raised as business improved.
2. The Iron and Steel Company's Workshop Pipe Foundry No. II, Kulti, Burdwan (Bengal).
The strike ended on the 6th April after the cancellation of the order of transfer of workers to another section.
3. Garden Reah Workshop of the I.G.N. Railway Company (Bengal).
1000 workers struck on the 11th April for higher wages and abolition of contract labour system.
4. The Chalisgaon Shri Laxminarayan Mill, Chalisgaon (Bombay)
The strike continued.
5. The Dun Aluminium Factory, Bombay.
On the 31st March, on a representation from the management to the Commissioner of Labour for his intervention in the dispute, the latter interviewed the representatives of the strikers and informed them of the concessions the management were prepared to grant. But the workers were not satisfied. On the 5th April the Management put up a notice stating that the wages of those workers who were not willing to resume work would be paid on the 18th. On the following day the factory worked with 95 hands including 50 strikers who had resumed work. The strike continued.
6. The Sarangpur Cotton Mill No. 2 Ahmedabad (Bombay).
On the 3rd April 414 workers struck in sympathy with a dismissed head Jobber. They also complained of fining for damaged cloth, hours of work etc. The management put up a notice to the effect that those who did not resume work should take their wages on the following day. 384 strikers resumed work on the 4th and 30 new hands were engaged by the management. The new hands did not attend on the 5th and some of the strikers

received their outstanding wages. The remaining strikers received their wages on the 6th and the strike ended.

7. The Chittivalsa Jute Mill Company Limited, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam District (Madras).
The strike continued.

8. The Choolai Mills (The Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills Company Limited), Choolai (Madras).

It is reported that the management have decided to close down the mill and wind up business and accordingly a month's notice has been given to the clerical establishment of the mill.

9. The Madras Publishing House Limited, Madras.

The strike continued.

10. The Fibre workers at Cocanada (Madras).

1000 workers employed in 25 establishments struck during the 1st week of March for an increase in wages and abolition of miscellaneous deductions from wages. Through the intervention of the Labour Commissioner, Madras, the parties have agreed to refer the question of the rates of wages to an arbitration board to be appointed by Government and to abide by its decision.

11. (1) The Turpentine and Rosin Factory and The Saw Mills and
(2) Bobbin Factory, Bareilly (United Provinces).

676 workers (176 in the Turpentine and Rosin Factory and 500 in the Saw Mills and Bobbin Factory which are under the same Management) struck on the 15th December 1938 for an increase in wages and redress of certain other grievances. The strike ended on the 3rd January 1939 as a result of an agreement reached between the parties. The terms of settlement include *inter alia* a minimum wage of Rs 11 per mensem or Rs 0-6-9 per day and a general increase of 6¼ per cent to all the workers getting above the minimum wage for these working in the Turpentine and Rosin Factory; and a minimum rates of Rs 0/6 per day with an increase of 6 pies to these getting annas 6 per day in the case of those working in the Saw Mills and Bobbin Factory.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 16 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 27th April 1939

A-Strikes

1. The Dhakeshwari Cotton Mill No. II, Howrah (Bengal).

The strike ended on the 24th March upon the Manager assuring the strikers that their grievances would be considered.

2. Garden Reach Workshop of the I.G.N. Railway Company (Bengal).

The number of workers involved is now reported to be 1252. Some strikers are reported to have resumed work on the 20th April.

3. Union North Jute Mill, Sealdah (Bengal).

On the 18th April 50 workers struck as a protest against the reduction of hands in the Spinning Department. Expect the Finishing Department, which employs about 231 hands, all the departments had to be closed, rendering 1973 workers idle.

4. The Chittivalsa Jute Mill Company Limited, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam District (Madras).
5. The Choolai Mills (The Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mill Company Limited), Choolai (Madras).
6. The Madras Publishing House Limited (Madras).

7. The Sri Meenakshi Mills, Madura (Madras).
The strikes continued.
8. The fibre workers at Cocanada (Madras).
The merchants have agreed to increase wages provisionally, pending decision by an arbitration board. Strikers resuming work will be given the option to work on the old rates or the tentative rates offered by the merchants subject to the condition that the rates decided upon by the arbitration board will be applied from the date of return. The strike continued.
9. Kumardhubi Engineering Works of Messrs Bird and Company, Dhanbad (Bihar).
The strike failed as it received little support from the workers of the other departments. The female labourers were replaced by male labourers and normal work was resumed on the 7th March.
10. The Chalisgaon Shri Laxminarayan Mill, Chalisgaon (Bombay).
On the 19th April the mill worked with 1080 hands, of which 800 were old workers. The management are prepared to absorb as many old workers as possible, except the 35 dismissed workers. The strike continued.
11. The Dun Aluminium Factory (Bombay).
An agreement was reached on the 15th April under which the management agreed to grant an increase of two annas to workers drawing eight annas or less per day and an increase of one and a half annas to workers drawing more than eight annas a day. All the strikers resumed work on the 17th April and the strike ended.
12. The Bandra Bus Company Limited (Bombay).
On the 7th April 146 employees struck as a protest against the dismissal of some drivers and for the redress of certain other grievances. Through the intervention of the Provincial Government a settlement was reached on the 14th under which both the parties agreed to refer the points in dispute to an arbitrator. It was further agreed that the work should be resumed on the 15th and that all the strikers should be employed except the dismissed hands pending the examination of their cases by the arbitrator. All the strikers resumed work on the 15th and the strike ended.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 17 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 4th May 1939

A-Strikes

1. Rickshaw coolies in Calcutta (Bengal).
The strike ended on the 10th March. A slight reduction in the sum payable daily by the men to their respective employers was made by some of the employers.
2. Garden Reach Workshop of the I.G.N. Railway Company, Calcutta (Bengal).
The strike ended on the 21st April. The Contractors agreed to grant an increase of anna one in the rate to those serving for over 3 months.
3. Union North Jute Mill, Sealdah (Bengal).
The strike ended on the 21st April. The workers resumed work unconditionally.
4. Umbrella Stick Factories, Calcutta (Bengal).
On the 17th April 200 workers employed in 20 factories struck for an increase in wages.
5. The Chittivalsa Jute Mill Company, Limited, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam District (Madras).

6. The Choolai Mills (The Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills Company, Limited), Choolai (Madras).
7. The Madras Publishing House Limited (Madras).
8. The Sri Meenakshi Mills, Madura (Madras).
9. The Fibre workers at Cocanada (Madras).

The view of the decision to appoint an Arbitration Board, the workers agreed to resume work immediately and the merchants agreed to pay wages at the rates to be decided upon by the Arbitration Board with effect from the date of rejoining.

10. The Al. YR. St Sugar Mills and Distillery, Tinnevely (Madras).

212 workers struck on the 15th April demanding bonus, increment, casual leave and higher wages. On a promise being given by the Agent of the Mills that all reasonable grievances would be redressed, the strikers resumed work on the 18th and the strike ended.

11. The Chalisgaon Shri Laxminarayan Mill, Chalisgaon (Bombay).

The mill worked with 1091 hands on the 26th April. The strike continued.

12. Empress Mills, Nagpur (Central Provinces) (Press report).

About 8500 workers struck on the 1st May for *inter alia* recognition of their Union, grant of leave with pay and security of service. The Provincial Government have appointed a Conciliation Board to investigate their demands.

13. Assam Oil Company at Digboi and Tinsukia (Assam).

About 10,000 employees of the Company and contractors' labour have been on strike since the 31st March. The immediate cause of the strike was the discharge of surplus hands without the promised notice to the Labour Union. The Company admitted the omission in one instance and offered to rectify. Detailed negotiations were proceeding between the parties for implementing the recommendations of the Court of Enquiry appointed by the Provincial Government, but the Union suddenly decided that the Company was not fulfilling the recommendations in spirit and decided to declare a strike in connection with the discharges and renewed all demands. The Provincial Government is endeavouring to induce the parties to refer their real differences to a Conciliation Board.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 18 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 11th May 1939

A-Strikes

1. Umbrella Stick Factories, Calcutta (Bengal).

The strike ended on the 26th April. The demand for higher rates was accepted in respect of all classes of sticks except cane sticks.

2. Pipe Foundry of the Indian Iron and Steel Limited, Kulti, Burdwan (Bengal).

855 workers struck on the 15th April, demanding a general increment. On the management giving an assurance that the question would soon be considered, the strikers resumed work on the 18th April.

3. Lakshmi Narayan Jute Mill, Narayangunj (Bengal).

On the 20th April 1000 workers struck for higher rates and regular payment. On an assurance being given that the demand for increase in rates would be considered the strikers resumed work on the 24th April.

4. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company Limited, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam (Madras).

5. The Choolai Mills (Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills Company Limited), Choolai (Madras).
6. The Sri Meenakshi Mills, Madura (Madras).
The strikers continued.

7. The Madras Publishing House Limited (Madras).

The company proposed to work the press with limited number of workers but was informed by the Labour Commissioner, Madras, that this would not be suitable and that the Press could only be re-opened on the terms already agreed to before the Minister for Labour, Madras. The Press continued to be closed.

8. Parry and Company's Factories at Nellikuppam, Ranipet and Samalkot (Madras).

1750 workers of the Nellikuppam and Samalkot factories and 625 workers of the Ranipet factory struck on the 25th and 26th April, respectively, following the rejection of their demands which included grant of one month's gratuity instead of half a month's gratuity, grant of casual leave with pay for 10 days instead of 6 days, abolition of piece-work system and grant for sick leave without limit. The Provincial Government had advised the workers not to strike but to negotiate with the company on the basis of a memorandum of reasonable demands. The advice was disregarded. The strike continued.

9. The Empress Mills, Nagpur (Central Provinces) (Press report).

On an assurance being given by the Provincial Government that the workers demand for the appointment of a Conciliation Board would be considered sympathetically, the strike was called off and the strikers were to resume work on the 4th May.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 19 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 18th May 1939

A-Strikes

1. Bengal Hosiery Workers (Bengal).

The Himmat Hosiery Factory (Howrah) did not reopen after it had closed on the 7th January. The strike may be taken to have ended on that date.

2. Rupnarain Rice Mill and six other rice mills, district Midnapore (Bengal).

Only two of the mills agreed to grant some increase. About 150 workers were involved.

3. India Electric Works, Calcutta (Bengal).

On the 5th May 150 workers observed a stay-in-strike as a protest against the dismissal of mistri, who was subsequently reinstated. The other demands of the strikers included, abolition of contract system of work, an 8-hour day and a minimum wage of Rs 201. The factory closed. The number of workers inside the factory is about 500. The strike continued.

4. Lakshmi Narayan Jute Mill, Narayanganj (Bengal).

The strike occurred in the Lakshmi Narayan Cotton Mill and not in the Lakshmi Narayan Jute Mill.

5. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company Limited, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam (Madras).
6. The Choolai Mills (Madras United Spinning Mills Company Limited), Choolai (Madras).
7. Sri Meenakshi Mills, Madura (Madras).
8. The Madras Publishing House, Limited (Madras).

The strikes continued.

9. Parry and Company's Factories at Nellikuppam, Ranipet and Samalkot (Madras).

The strike continued.

10. Al. YR. St Sugar Mills and Distillery, Tachanallur, Tinnevely District (Madras).

On the 27th April 220 workers struck as a protest against the failure of the management to implement the promise made by them to meet the demands of the workers. A settlement was reached and the strikers resumed work on the 3rd May.

11. The Chalisgaon Shri Laxminarayan Mill (Bombay).

The strike ended in a 'compromise' on the 3rd May when according to a settlement reached on the previous day the management employed the first batch of the old workers.

12. The Nagpal Woollen Mill (Bombay).

40 workers struck on the 29th April demanding the withdrawal of the notice regarding reduction in spinners' wages. On the same day 70 workers on night shift did not start work on account of picketing. On the 1st May as a result of picketing no workers came in for work and the mill had to be closed. 320 hands were affected. On the management agreeing to withdraw the notice and to increase the wages of other workers by one anna, all the strikers resumed work on the 5th and the strike ended.

B-General

13. The Bombay Cotton Manufacturing Company, Limited, closed from 1st May 1939 on account of trade depression. For similar reasons the Century Mill, Bombay, retrenched a large number of hands during the last six weeks. The total number of workers affected is about 2500.
14. The Sir Shapurji Broacha Mills (Bombay) and the Raghuvanshi Mill (Bombay) have notified that, on account of trade depression the mills would be closed from the 10th and 16th May, respectively. About 3270 hands are affected.
15. The Madhavji Dharamsi Mill, Bombay, have also put up a notice that owing to trade depression all departments except the bleaching and finishing departments would be closed from the 16th May. This will affect about 1,150 hands. For similar reasons the Sasoon Spinning and Weaving Mill (Bombay) and the Shree Nivas Cotton Mill (Bombay) have also notified about 400 of their workers that their service will not be required after the expiry of the notice.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 20 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 25th May 1939

A-Strikes

1. India Electric Works, Calcutta (Bengal).

The strike continued.

2. New Central Jute Mill, Howrah (Bengal).

On the 17th May all 1000 workers struck as a protest against the dismissal of two weavers and the supply of bad yarn. The strike continued.

3. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills, Company, Limited, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam (Madras).

4. The Choolai Mills (Madras Spinning and Weaving Mills, Company Limited), Choolai (Madras).

5. The Madras Publishing House Limited (Madras).

6. The Sri Meenakshi Mills, Madura (Madras).

The Court of Enquiry has held that the strike was not justified and that the strikers are not entitled to claim re-instatement as a matter of right. It has however recommended that three of the five dismissed workers should be re-instated and that the Madura Labour

Union should be recognized by the management. The strikers have decided to abide by the award and to call off the strike.

7. Parry and Company's Factories at Nellikuppam, Ranipet and Samalkot (Madras).

The strikers at Ranipet decided to call off the strike and to resume work on the 11th May, but when they went for work on that day 338 of them were taken back. The workers have represented the matter to the Premier of Madras.

8. Al. YR. St Sugar Mills and Distilleries, Tachanallur, Tinnevely Taluk (Madras).

The management agreed to increase the wages of the labourers from 1st April 1939 and to consider the increase of pay of the staff shortly.

9. Sweepers of the Municipal Committee, Khamgaon, Buldana District (Central Provinces and Berar).

On the 9th April 50 male sweepers, out of a total strength of 110, struck for the redress of grievances relating to maternity and sick leave, increase of pay of certain posts, distribution of work, re-instatement of a dismissed sweeper and payment of wages for March. The remaining 60 sweepers who were women and were either the wives or dependants of the strikers also refrained from working. On the Municipal Committee agreeing to consider the demands of the strikers, all the strikers resumed work on the 14th April and the strike ended.

10. The Sir Shapurji Broacha Mills (Bombay) put up a fresh notice on the 10th May to the effect that their previous notices had been extended until such time as the work on hand was finished and that the services of the number of workers required for the purpose would be retained and the rest paid off on the 12th May.
11. The Madhavji Dharamsi Mill (Bombay), put up a similar notice and informed the workers that surplus hands would be paid off on the 18th May.
12. The Bradbury and Apollo Mills (Bombay), have notified their workers in certain departments that their services would not be required after the expiry of the notice. This will affect about 570 hands.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 21 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 1st June 1939

A-Strikes

1. New Central Jute Mill Howrah (Bengal).

Through the intervention of the Assistant Labour Commissioner, who advised the strikers to return to facilitate a settlement being reached, work was resumed unconditionally on the 24th May and the strike ended. The management however, refused to re-instate the dismissed men.

2. Carpenters of Behala and South Suburbs of Calcutta (Bengal).

On the 17th May 100 carpenters struck for 25% increase in wages, wages for Sunday work and 10-hours work a day including 2 hours break for midday meal. The strike continued.

3. India Electric Works, Calcutta (Bengal).

The strike continued.

4. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company Limited, Chittivalsa (Madras).

5. The Choolai Mills (Madras Spinning and Weaving Mills Company Limited), Choolai (Madras).

6. The Madras Publishing House Limited, Madras (Madras).

7. The Sri Meenakshi Mills, Madura (Madras).
The strikes continued.
8. The New Ram Chand Cotton Mill Company, Hathras (United Provinces).
On the 20th April 152 weavers and other men of the weaving section struck for increase in wages. The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 28th.
9. The New Victoria Mills Company Limited, Cawnpore (United Provinces).
On the 2nd May 4070 workers struck following the refusal by 51 workers to accept the 14 days notice of discharge served on them as a result of the re-organization of the mill. The strike continued.
10. The Central India Spinning Weaving and Manufacturing Company Limited, 'The Empress Mills', Nagpur (Central Provinces and Berar).
The official report confirms the press reports. The strike ended on the 4th May.
11. Bihariji Mills, Patna (Bihar) (Press Report).
On the 22nd May 400 operatives struck for the alleged non-redress of their grievances. The strike continued.

B-General

12. The Sassoon Spinning and Weaving Mill, and the E.D. Sassoon Turkey Red Dye Works, Bombay (Bombay), have dispensed with the services of about 328 workers on account of trade depression.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 22 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 8th June 1939

A-Strikes

1. India Electric Works, Calcutta (Bengal).
The strikers vacated the factory on the 28th May on being assured by a Member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly that he would get the management to agree to their demands. Work was resumed on the 1st June and the strike ended.
2. New Central Jute Mill Howrah (Bengal).
The number on strike was 709 and not 1000 as previously reported.
3. Carpenters of Behala and South Suburbs of Calcutta (Bengal).
15 establishments, situated mainly in North and Central Calcutta, are involved. The strike continued.
4. Workshop of the Iron and Steel Company Limited at Kulti (Bengal).
On the 31st May 690 workers of the Blast Furnace Department struck demanding the discharge of a worker who had maligned their Union officials. The strike continued.
5. The Chandrodaya Mill, Viramgaum (Bombay).
On the 22nd May about 314 weavers struck as a protest against insufficient supply of yarn. The management closed the mill on the following day. 1150 workers are involved. The strike continued.
6. The Habib Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).
On the 28th May 50 weavers working on day shift for an increase in wages. In the evening 35 working on night shift joined the strikers. On the following day the remaining 215 workers of the day and night shifts joined the strike. On the 1st June the management notified the workers that as they had gone on strike without previous notice their services

would be dispensed with if they failed to resume work unconditionally within 48 hours. The strike continued.

7. The Vijay Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

On the 29th May 50 weavers struck for an increase in wages. On the 30th May about 68 other workers joined the strike. On the 1st June the management put up a notice similar to that put up by the Habib Silk Mill. The strike continued.

8. The Manhar Silk Mill Bombay (Bombay).

On the 30th May 150 women winders struck for an increase in wages. On the following day the management put up a notice to the effect that from 1st June all departments except the Dyeing Department would be closed as the workers had struck without assigning any reason and without giving previous notice. The strike continued.

9. Messrs Mulji Sicca and Company, Bilaspur District (Central Provinces and Berar).

200 workers have been on strike since the 1st May. Their demands relate to wages and the alleged wrongful dismissal of two workers.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 23 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 15th June 1939

A-Strikes

1. Carpenters of Behala and South Suburbs of Calcutta (Bengal).

A few strikers have resumed work unconditionally.

2. Workshop of the Iron and Steel Company Limited at Kulti (Bengal).

The strikers are now demanding that the worker concerned should be transferred and that a member of their Union, an ex-employee, now in jail in connection with a criminal case with which the company has no concern, should be released. The strike continued.

3. Shamnagar North Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

On the 31st May 1000 workers struck as a protest against the system of taking photographs of the workers for record in their service books and the refusal of the management to return the photographs unless the workers paid for them. The strike continued.

4. Angus Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

On the 31st May 700 female workers struck for the same reason as the workers of the Shamnagar North Jute Mill. The strike continued.

5. Victoria Jute Mill Hooghly (Bengal).

On the 5th June all 4542 workers absented themselves due to picketing on the previous night by the followers of a Member (Labour) of the Provincial Legislative Assembly. The mill closed.

6. Shamnagar South Jute Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).

On the 5th June 1000 workers struck demanding that the record of their name and addresses should be returned to them and that the management of the Shamnagar North Jute Mill should be prevailed upon to agree to similar demands of the strikers of that mill. The mill closed.

7. Empire Bone Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).

On the 6th June 351 workers struck for higher wages. The strike continued.

8. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company Limited, Chittivalsa (Madras).

9. The Choolai Mills (Madras Spinning and Weaving Mills Company Limited), Choolai (Madras).

10. The Madras Publishing House Limited, Madras (Madras).

11. The Sri Meenakshi Mills, Madura (Madras).

The strike was called off on the 8th May.

12. Parry and Company's Factories at Nellikuppam, Ranipet and Samalkot (Madras).

The workers employed in the Samalkot factory resumed work unconditionally on the 29th May.

13. Bazar Azamganj and Akbarpur Mandi, Sambhal (United Provinces).

On the 4th April about 250 *palledars* (porters) struck for increase in wages. They also demanded that the grain dealers should have no right to remove any *palledars* from their shops. As a result of a compromise the strike was called off, and work was resumed on the 23rd April but the workers again struck on the 28th April. Through the intervention of the local authorities a settlement was reached on the 21st May and the strike ended. The terms of the settlement provide *inter alia* that the workers should be free to work in any shop and that they should be paid at the rates fixed for different classes of work.

14. Messrs Mulji Sicca and Company, Bilaspur District (Central Provinces and Berar).

All 100 workers of the Company's factory at village Kosmanda and all 80 workers of the Company's factory at village Kunda were involved in the strikers. The strikers of the former factory resumed work on the 14th May and the strike ended. The factory at Kunda has closed.

15. The Ghelabhai Icharam Metal Works, Bombay (Bombay).

16. Bhookamdas Damodardas and Brothers, Bombay (Bombay).

17. The Lallubhai Narayandas and Company, Bombay (Bombay).

18. The Bhikabhai Jairamdas and Company, Bombay (Bombay).

25 workers of the Ghelabhai Icharam Metal Works struck on the 13th May as a protest against proposed reduction in wages, and 115 workers of the three remaining factories struck about the 30th May for an increase in wages. A settlement was reached on the 6th June when the strikers resumed work and the strike ended. The terms of the settlement include an increase of 25 per cent in the existing rates of wages, payment of wages on the 10th of every month and grant of two months' leave without pay.

19. The Chandrodaya Mill, Viramgaum (Bombay).

A compromise was arrived at and all the strikers resumed work on the 25th May. The strike ended.

20. The Habib Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

On the 6th June the management had notified that all strikers who had not resumed work were dismissed and that they would be paid their outstanding wages on the 10th. The strike continued.

21. The Vijay Silk Mill Bombay (Bombay).

On the 5th June the management put up a notice similar to that put up by the Habib Silk Mill. The strike continued.

22. The Manhar Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

On the 1st June 25 workers in the Dyeing Department absented themselves from work. Thereupon the management notified the workers that they would be considered as having been dismissed from service if they failed to resume work within 24 hours. This was followed by a notice on the 5th which stated that the absentees of the Dyeing Department would be paid their outstanding wages on the 10th. The strike continued.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 24 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 22nd June 1939

A-Strikes

1. Carpenters of Behala and South Suburbs of Calcutta (Bengal).

The strike continued in South Calcutta.

2. Workshop of the Iron and Steel Company, Limited at Kulti (Bengal) (Press Report).

The strike was called off on the 14th June upon the appointment of a Committee of enquiry by the management. The strikers will be represented on the Committee.

3. Shamnagar North Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

4. Angus Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

5. Victoria Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

6. Shamnagar South Jute Mill (Bengal).

A settlement was reached. The management agreed not to take any more photos and to hand over to the workers negative of their photos and duplicate copies of their service records. They also agreed not to victimize any strikers. Work was resumed in the Angus Jute Mill on the 8th June and in the other three mills on the 12th. The strikes ended.

7. Empire Bone Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).

The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 8th June and the strike ended.

8. French Motor Car Company, Calcutta (Bengal).

On the 13th June 406 workers struck demanding increment, casual leave, gratuity, provident fund and recognition of the Union. By the 15th 57 strikers had resumed work. The strike continued.

9. The Habib Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

10. The Manhar Silk Mill Bombay (Bombay).

On the 10th June about 50 strikers of the Habib Silk Mill, 10 strikers of the Vijay Silk Mill and 700 strikers of the Manhar Silk Mill accepted their wages. The managements notified the strikers on the 12th that those who had not taken away their wages should do so within 48 hours of the posting of the notice, otherwise payment would be suspended until further notice. None of the workers, however, took away wages. The strikes continued.

11. The New Era Textile Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

On the 13th June, 88 weavers struck for the introduction of fixed wage system. The management put up a notice dispensing with the services of the strikers for going on strike without previous notice. The strike continued.

12. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company, Limited, Chittivalsa (Madras).

13. The Choolai Mills (Madras Spinning and Weaving Mills Company, Limited), Choolai (Madras).

14. The Madras Publishing House Limited, Madras (Madras).

The concerns have closed indefinitely.

15. Parry and Company's Factories at Nellikuppam and Ranipet (Madras).

Old labourers are being re-employed gradually in the Ranipet Factory. The strength on the 5th June was 522 old labourers and 149 new.

16. Municipal and other Sweepers of Amritsar (Punjab).

On the 12th June 925 Municipal sweepers struck for the redress of their grievances, the chief of which related to recognition of their Union, date of payment of salaries, grant of privilege and maternity leave, separate provision for the education of sweepers' children,

provident fund and increase in wages. The Municipal Committee accepted most of the demands, but on their refusal to grant an increase in wages forthwith the sweeper struck. About 2075 sweepers in private employ joined the strikers in sympathy. The Municipal authorities had notified that all the strikers should resume work by the 13th morning failing which they would be dismissed. By the 13th evening 400 strikers had resumed work and by the 15th all but 10 per cent were at work. The strike ended on the following day when all the strikers, except those who were arrested, resumed work.

17. Asbestos Cement Limited, Kymore (Central Provinces).

On the 18th May 200 workers struck for increase in wages and dismissal of a Tally Clerk. The factory closed on 22nd May. 1000 workers are involved.

18. The Perfect Pottery Company Limited, Jubbulpore (Central Provinces).

On the 31st May 200 workers struck. The company declared a lock-out. 840 workers are involved. The cause of the strike is not known at present.

B-General

19. The Simplex Mill, Bombay, notified on the 7th June that for want of orders the Reeling Department would be closed from 22nd June. About 100 hands are affected.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 25 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 29th June 1939

A-Strikes

1. Carpenters of Behala and South Suburbs of Calcutta (Bengal).

The strike continued.

2. French Motor Car Company, Calcutta (Bengal).

49 strikers resumed work on the 22nd June. 56 new hands were also appointed on the 20th June. The management have refused to negotiate terms of settlement with the Union.

3. Shivali Biri Factory, Dacca (Bengal).

On the 5th June 100 workers struck as a protest against a cut of 2 annas in their rate. Through the intervention of the local leaders of the Congress Socialist Party a settlement was reached under which half the cut was restored. The strike ended on the 12th June.

4. The Habib Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

5. The Vijay Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

On the 16th June 76 strikers of the Habib Silk Mill and 25 strikers of the Vijay Silk Mill resumed work unconditionally. On the following day the managements notified the strikers that they would be allowed to resume work up to 19th June and that those who did not resume work by that date would be considered as discharged from service. The strikes continued.

6. The Manhar Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay)

35 strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 16th June. The management notified the strikers that those who resumed work on the 17th or 18th would not have their eight days' wages cut but that those who failed to do so would be considered as discharged from service. The strike continued.

7. The New Era Textile Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

By the 23rd June all the strikers resumed work unconditionally and the strike ended.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 24 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 22nd June 1939

A-Strikes

1. Carpenters of Behala and South Suburbs of Calcutta (Bengal).

The strike continued in South Calcutta.

2. Workshop of the Iron and Steel Company, Limited at Kulti (Bengal) (Press Report).

The strike was called off on the 14th June upon the appointment of a Committee of enquiry by the management. The strikers will be represented on the Committee.

3. Shamnagar North Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

4. Angus Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

5. Victoria Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

6. Shamnagar South Jute Mill (Bengal).

A settlement was reached. The management agreed not to take any more photos and to hand over to the workers negative of their photos and duplicate copies of their service records. They also agreed not to victimize any strikers. Work was resumed in the Angus Jute Mill on the 8th June and in the other three mills on the 12th. The strikes ended.

7. Empire Bone Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).

The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 8th June and the strike ended.

8. French Motor Car Company, Calcutta (Bengal).

On the 13th June 406 workers struck demanding increment, casual leave, gratuity, provident fund and recognition of the Union. By the 15th 57 strikers had resumed work. The strike continued.

9. The Habib Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

10. The Manhar Silk Mill Bombay (Bombay).

On the 10th June about 50 strikers of the Habib Silk Mill, 10 strikers of the Vijay Silk Mill and 700 strikers of the Manhar Silk Mill accepted their wages. The managements notified the strikers on the 12th that those who had not taken away their wages should do so within 48 hours of the posting of the notice, otherwise payment would be suspended until further notice. None of the workers, however, took away wages. The strikes continued.

11. The New Era Textile Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

On the 13th June, 88 weavers struck for the introduction of fixed wage system. The management put up a notice dispensing with the services of the strikers for going on strike without previous notice. The strike continued.

12. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company, Limited, Chittivalsa (Madras).

13. The Choolai Mills (Madras Spinning and Weaving Mills Company, Limited), Choolai (Madras).

14. The Madras Publishing House Limited, Madras (Madras).

The concerns have closed indefinitely.

15. Parry and Company's Factories at Nellikuppam and Ranipet (Madras).

Old labourers are being re-employed gradually in the Ranipet Factory. The strength on the 5th June was 522 old labourers and 149 new.

16. Municipal and other Sweepers of Amritsar (Punjab).

On the 12th June 925 Municipal sweepers struck for the redress of their grievances, the chief of which related to recognition of their Union, date of payment of salaries, grant of privilege and maternity leave, separate provision for the education of sweepers' children,

provident fund and increase in wages. The Municipal Committee accepted most of the demands, but on their refusal to grant an increase in wages forthwith the sweeper struck. About 2075 sweepers in private employ joined the strikers in sympathy. The Municipal authorities had notified that all the strikers should resume work by the 13th morning failing which they would be dismissed. By the 13th evening 400 strikers had resumed work and by the 15th all but 10 per cent were at work. The strike ended on the following day when all the strikers, except those who were arrested, resumed work.

17. Asbestos Cement Limited, Kymore (Central Provinces).

On the 18th May 200 workers struck for increase in wages and dismissal of a Tally Clerk. The factory closed on 22nd May. 1000 workers are involved.

18. The Perfect Pottery Company Limited, Jubbulpore (Central Provinces).

On the 31st May 200 workers struck. The company declared a lock-out. 840 workers are involved. The cause of the strike is not known at present.

B-General

19. The Simplex Mill, Bombay, notified on the 7th June that for want of orders the Reeling Department would be closed from 22nd June. About 100 hands are affected.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 25 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 29th June 1939

A-Strikes

1. Carpenters of Behala and South Suburbs of Calcutta (Bengal).

The strike continued.

2. French Motor Car Company, Calcutta (Bengal).

49 strikers resumed work on the 22nd June. 56 new hands were also appointed on the 20th June. The management have refused to negotiate terms of settlement with the Union.

3. Shivali Biri Factory, Dacca (Bengal).

On the 5th June 100 workers struck as a protest against a cut of 2 annas in their rate. Through the intervention of the local leaders of the Congress Socialist Party a settlement was reached under which half the cut was restored. The strike ended on the 12th June.

4. The Habib Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

5. The Vijay Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

On the 16th June 76 strikers of the Habib Silk Mill and 25 strikers of the Vijay Silk Mill resumed work unconditionally. On the following day the managements notified the strikers that they would be allowed to resume work up to 19th June and that those who did not resume work by that date would be considered as discharged from service. The strikes continued.

6. The Manhar Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay)

35 strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 16th June. The management notified the strikers that those who resumed work on the 17th or 18th would not have their eight days' wages cut but that those who failed to do so would be considered as discharged from service. The strike continued.

7. The New Era Textile Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

By the 23rd June all the strikers resumed work unconditionally and the strike ended.

8. The Madras Publishing House, Limited, Madras (Madras).

As a result of mediation by private individuals a settlement was reached and the strike ended on the 13th June. The terms of the settlement include the re-employment of workers without victimization, payment of a month's wages to all workers and payment of an extra month's wages to those workers who are not re-employed by the end of the month.

9. Parry and Company's Factories at Nellikuppam and Ranipet (Madras).

The strike at Nellikuppam may be considered to have ended about the middle of May.

10. The Perfect Pottery Company, Limited, Jubbulpore (Central Provinces and Berar).

The number of workers on strikes was 300 and not 200 as previously reported. The lock-out was lifted unconditionally and the strike ended on the 14th June.

11. The Raja Gokuldas Mills, Limited, Jubbulpore (Central Provinces and Berar).

On the 13th June about 1000 workers struck as a protest against the intention of the management to close the mills for an indefinite period owing to trade depression. The strike continued.

12. Asbestos Cement Limited, Kymora (Central Provinces and Berar).

The company have notified the strikers that they are prepared to re-open the factory at any time under exactly the same conditions as existed at the time work was suspended, and to re-employ all the workers.

13. Sind Flour Mills, Karachi (Sind).

On the 9th June 131 workers struck as a protest against the cut in pay of 7 labourers for the days they remained absent due to sickness. Other demands related to the grant of Provident Fund, wages during sickness and polite treatment from superiors. A settlement was reached and the strike ended on the 13th. All the demands except that for Provident Fund were granted.

B-General

14. The Victoria Mill No. II, Bombay, notified about 175 weavers and the workers in the doubling, Reeling and Winding Departments that their services would be dispensed with from 1st July on account of trade depression. This will affect about 255 hands.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 26 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 6th July 1939

A-Strikes

1. Carpenters of Behala and South Suburbs of Calcutta (Bengal).

20 strikers belonging to a firm in South Calcutta resumed work on the 20th June, their demands having been accepted. The strike continued.

2. French Motor Car Company, Calcutta (Bengal).

The number of new hands who have been employed is 50 and not 56 as previously reported. The strike continued.

3. The Habib Silk Mill, Bombay (Bombay).

4. The Vijay Silk Mill Bombay (Bombay).

5. The Manhar Silk Mill Bombay (Bombay).

On the advice of the Parliamentary Secretary for Labour, the strikers decided to resume work on the 29th June and the strike ended. The Parliamentary Secretary had promised that he would hold an enquiry into their wages question. In the Habib Silk Mill and the

Vijay Silk Mill all the strikers except 30 and 12 women winders, respectively, have been re-instated. The strikers of the Manhar Silk Mill will be re-instated gradually.

6. The Chandrodaya Mill, Viramgaum (Bombay).

The cause of the strike was the stoppage of certain looms and not the insufficient supply of yarn as previously reported. The strikers had resumed work on the 25th May on the advice of the Textile Labour Association, Ahmedabad, who had promised to enquire into their grievances.

7. The Upper India Couper Paper Mill, Lucknow (United Provinces).

On the 24th June 750 workers struck following an assault by the Manager on 4 workers who had approached him for granting their increments which were withheld. Only 77 workers were given their annual increment. The strikers are demanding the punishment of the manager, the grant of annual increment with arrears in all cases and the grant of additional increment as recommended by the Labour Commissioner. The strike continued.

8. The Raja Gokuldas Mills, Limited, Jubbulpore (Central Provinces and Berar).

The strike continued.

9. Bararee Coke Plant, Kenduadik (Bihar).

On the 14th April 150 loading coolies struck for increase in wages in view of the fact that they had to carry coke to a greater distance than hitherto. The number on strike subsequently rose to 370. The strikers resumed work on the 1st May, following an agreement that the dispute should be referred to the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Dhanbad, for arbitration.

B-General

10. The Alexandra Mill, Bombay, put up a notice on the 23rd June to the effect that for want of orders the weaving department of the mill would be closed from 12th July 1939. This will affect about 236 hands.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 27 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 13th July 1939

A-Strikes

1. Carpenters of Behala and South Suburbs of Calcutta (Bengal).

The strikers belonging to the firms affected in South Calcutta resumed work on the 27th June, some of their demands having been accepted.

2. French Motor Car Company Calcutta (Bengal).

Through the intervention of the Labour Commissioner, Bengal, a settlement was reached and the strike ended on the 4th July. Work was restarted with 323 strikers and 68 new hands. The terms of the settlement include the calculation of wages on a daily basis, grant of 7 days casual or sick leave in a year, re-employment of retrenched hands and the recognition of a re-constituted Union.

3. Shamnagar South Jute Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).

On the 3rd July 2000 workers struck as a protest against the refusal of the management to provide a discharged *budli* woman worker with a permanent job immediately. The strike continued.

4. Radha Kissen Cotton Mill No. II, Belur, Howrah (Bengal).

On the 3rd July 250 hands struck demanding that better yarn should be supplied and that higher rates should be paid for higher quality of work. The mill closed for an indefinite period. 500 workers are affected.

5. Dunbar Cotton Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).

On the 28th June 160 spinners struck apprehending that 5 of their colleagues who had absented themselves from the second shift on the day of a certain festival would be punished. The manager announced that he had excused the workers in question and asked the strikers to return. The latter, however, preferred to hold out. The strike continued.

6. Victoria Jute Mills, Hooghly (Bengal).

On the 4th July 896 workers struck as a protest against the refusal of the manager to employ a discharged woman worker of Mill No. II and the appointment of a new man in place of a dismissed worker in Mill No. 1. The strike continued.

7. The Victoria Mill No. 2, Bombay (Bombay).

On the 30th June all 150 weavers working on night shift struck demanding a change over to day shift from 1st July. On the 2nd July the management notified the strikers that, if they did not resume work by the evening of the 3rd, night work in the Weaving Department would be discontinued and that their services would be dispensed with. All strikers resumed work on the 3rd and the strike ended.

8. The Madura Knitting Company, Madura (Madras).

Following an announcement by the management that owing to trade depression 500 workers would be retrenched from 1st June 1939, the Union of the workers started to agitate that there should be no reduction of establishment and that should it be necessary to so, each retrenched worker should be paid a gratuity of Rs 25. A further demand was the recognition of the Union. The matter was still under investigation by the Labour Commissioner, Madras, when on 29th June 250 workers struck. The strike continued.

9. The Upper India Couper Paper Mills, Lucknow (United Provinces).

A compromise was reached and the strike ended on the 28th June. The conditions of the compromise included the grant of annual increment to workers with 5 years' service, payment of salaries for June on the 7th July and the dues of previous months by 31st July.

10. The Bihari Flour and Oil Mills, Patna (Bihar).

In consequence of certain differences between the management and the workers a lock-out was declared on the 8th March. At the instance of both the parties an Arbitration Board was constituted to consider the points in dispute. The Board formulated their final award on the 22nd April which was accepted by the management but not by the workers. On the 22 May about 400 employees struck declaring that the award was not acceptable to them. The strike was, however, called off on the 5th June following a settlement effected by a Board of Conciliation.

B-General

11. The E.D. Sassoon Mill, Bombay, have notified that for want of orders the spinning section of the mill would be closed from 16th July. This will affect about 600 hands.
12. For similar reasons the Sassoon Spinning and Weaving Mill, Bombay, have also notified their workers in the mixing, blow-room, card-room, ring, reeling and bundling Departments that their services would not be required from 15th July.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 28 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 20th July 1939

A-Strikes

1. Radha Kissen Cotton Mill No. II, Belur, Howrah (Bengal).
The mill has closed.
2. Shamnagar South Jute Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).
3. Victoria Jute Mills, Hooghly (Bengal).
The strikes continued.
4. Dunbar Cotton Mill 24 Parganas (Bengal).
The number of workers who had absented themselves on the day of the festival was 60 and not 5 as previously reported. On the 5th July all except 75 strikers resumed work.
5. Hukumchand Electric Steel Works, Calcutta (Bengal).
On the 6th July all 800 workers struck for the redress of grievances such as suspension of 2 workers, inadequate leave facilities, unsatisfactory arrangement for the supply of drinking water etc. The factory closed. According to a press report a settlement was reached through the intervention of a member of the Provincial Legislative Council and the strikers were to resume work on the 17th.
6. Hanuman Jute Mill, Howrah (Bengal).
On the 7th July 139 workers of the cop-winding section struck as a protest against an assault by the line babu on a worker who was suspected of being concerned in the stealing of certain machinery parts. The strike continued.
7. Government Telegraph Store Yard, Alipore, Calcutta (Bengal).
On the 8th July 86 workers of the galvanizing section struck for payment at double the ordinary rate for Sunday work and 1½ time the rate for night work. According to a Press report the remaining 914 workers joined the strikers on the 13th July in sympathy. The factory closed for a week.
8. The Tata Textile (Cotton) Mill Bombay (Bombay).
On the 10th July all 700 spinners struck for the withdrawal of notices of discharge served on 26 spinners on account of trade depression. On the dispute being referred to the Chief Conciliator the strikers resumed work on the 13th and the strike ended.
9. The Madura Knitting Company, Madura (Madras).
The strike continued.
10. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Limited, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam District (Madras).
400 carters struck on the 27th May last as a protest against the introduction of pneumatic-tyred bullock carts. Through the intervention of the Commissioner of Labour, Madras, a settlement was reached, the carters agreeing to carry fifty per cent of the total goods by pneumatic-tyred carts with reduced loads. The strike ended on the 4th July.
11. The Raja Gokuldas Mills Limited, Jubbulpore (Central Provinces and Berar).
The strike continued.
12. The Lodna Colliery Company Limited, Lodna-Bhaga Collieries of Messrs, Dhanbad (Bihar).
A temporary compromise was reached and the strike ended on the following day i.e. the 22nd March. The authorities had promised to redress the grievances of the workers.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 29 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 27th July 1939

A-Strikes

1. Shamnagar South Jute Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).
The mill which re-opened on the 21st July is now working practically with its normal strength. Work was resumed unconditionally.
2. Radha Kissen Cotton Mill No. II, Belur, Howrah (Bengal).
The mill continued to be closed.
3. Victoria Jute Mills, Hooghly (Bengal).
Work was resumed unconditionally on the 17th July. 300 strikers were not re-instated on the ground that their posts had been filled by new hands.
4. Dunbar Cotton Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).
All the strikers, except two who were ring-leaders, resumed work unconditionally on the 6th July. The strike ended.
5. Hukumchand Electric Steel Works, Calcutta (Bengal).
The strike ended on the 17th July when all the strikers resumed work unconditionally.
6. Government Telegraph Store Yard, Alipore, Calcutta (Bengal).
1,100 persons were involved. 286 men resumed work unconditionally on the 21st July. The strike continued.
7. Asbestos Cement Limited, Kymore (Central Provinces and Berar).
The strike ended on the 25th June. The factory re-opened on the following day and all the workers resumed work. The factory will continue to work 6 days a week until further notice.
8. The Raja Gokuldas Mills Limited, Jubbulpore (Central Provinces and Berar).
The strike continued.
9. The R.G. Cotton Mills, Lucknow (United Provinces).
300 workers of the carding and spinning department struck on the 9th July on the rejection of their demand for a holiday on Sundays as in the case of other sections of the mill. The mill closed. 1042 persons are affected. The strike continued.
10. Bidi shops in the Bombay City.
On the 7th July 60 workers of Mr S.K. Narker's Bidi Works struck for an increase in wages. As a result of the efforts of a local labour leader, 700 bidi workers in the labour area joined the strike by the 19th and on the 21st 1000 bidi workers in the Kamathipura area struck in sympathy. Certain demands are reported to have been formulated. The strike continued.

B-General

1. The Simplex Mills Company, Limited, Bombay, have notified that the services of all the 100 workers in the winding department would be dispensed with from the 30th July on account of depression in trade.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 30 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 3rd August 1939

A-Strikes

1. Hanuman Jute Mill, Howrah (Bengal)
The strike ended on the 20th July. The strikers were replaced by new hands.
2. Shamnagar South Jute Mill, 24 Parganas (Bengal).
The strike may be considered to have ended on the 21st July. A number of strikers were replaced by new hands.
3. Government Telegraph Store Yard, Alipore (Bengal).
By the 25th July, 850 strikers resumed work unconditionally and no further hands will be taken. The Superintendent took the opportunity to retrench the surplus staff.
4. Radha Kissen Cotton Mill, Howrah (Bengal).
The mill continued to be closed.
5. Dhakeshwari Cotton Mills, Nos I and II (Bengal).
3000 workers of Mill No. I struck on the 19th July for the re-instatement of the manager and two other officers who had been dismissed, provision of free quarters, one month's leave with full pay in a year, Puja bonus, and no retrenchment. The workers of Mill No. II joined the strike on the 21st. According to a press report the strike was called off on the 26th July as a result of an agreement which was reached through the intervention of the local congress leaders.
6. Lever Brothers' Soap Factory, Kidderpore, Calcutta.
250 worker staged a stay-in-strike on the 25th July as a protest against the dismissal of a worker for insubordination. They were, however, evicted from the premises by the police. The strike continued.
7. The Reliance Pottery Works, Chanch. District Dhanbad (Bihar).
600 workers struck on the 13th July for the stoppage of retrenchment due to shortage of work, abolition of the Cowrie System of payment and recognition of the Labour Federation.
8. The Indian Steel and Wire Products Company Limited, Jamshedpur (Bihar).
All the employees struck on the 2nd July as a protest against the suspension of a worker on the 30th June for unsatisfactory work. In a clash between picketers and the police one of the picketers died as a result of an injury. The strikers are demanding a general increase in wages, production bonus and a contribution from the company for a memorial to the picketer who died.
9. Gaya Cotton and Jute Mills Limited, Gaya (Bihar).
All 179 workers of the Ring and Roving Department struck on the 8th July as a protest against the alleged ill-treatment of a worker by the Spinning Master. Owing to picketing work in the remaining Departments, except the Engineering Department, employing about 1020 hands had to be suspended. The strike ended on the 11th July. Both the parties agreed to place the grievances of the workers before an Arbitration Board.
10. Raja Gokuldas Mills Limited, Jubbulpore (Central Provinces and Berar).
The strike continued.
11. The Madura Knitting Company, Madura (Madras).
The factory is now working with as much labour as is required and the strike may be considered to have fizzled out.

12. Sweepers of the Multan Municipality, Multan (Punjab).

All the sweepers, except 30, struck on the 22nd July following the rejection of their demands which *inter alia* related to weekly half holidays, maternity and sick leave, free quarters, minimum wage, education of sweepers' children and re-instatement of discharged sweepers. Work was carried on with the help of sweepers from neighbouring towns. The strikers later refused to carry on work in private houses. At a meeting between Municipal Commissioners and representatives of the residents and sweepers the strikers put forward additional demands on private citizens regarding increase of pay, supply of clothes and food and release of arrested strikers. According to a press report the strike was called off on the 1st August following an assurance given by the Municipal Committee that their demands would be considered favourably.

13. The R.G. Cotton Mills, Lucknow (United Provinces).

The parties agreed to the dispute being referred to a committee and the strike was called off on the 16th July.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 31 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 10th August 1939

A-Strikes

1. Radha Kissen Cotton Mill, Howrah.

All the departments with the exception of the weaving department have been working since the 31st July. The management have engaged 147 new hands. The strikers have been assured that the question of their rates would be considered. The strike continued.

2. Lever Brothers' Soap Factory, Kidderpore, Calcutta.

By the 2nd August 20 strikers resumed work and 20 new hands were engaged. The strike continued.

3. Umbrella Stick Factory, Champatala, Calcutta.

All 126 workers struck on the 25th July as a protest against the imposition of additional duties. The factory closed for a week on account of trade depression.

4. India Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

1006 workers struck on the 2nd August as a protest against the proposed introduction of a change in the *badil* system whereby the permanent workers going on leave would not be asked to select their substitutes but the latter would be selected by the management from among the workers retrenched in consequence of the decision of the Indian Jute Mills' Association regarding the restriction of the output of jute mills. The strike has been brought about by certain persons who used to lend money to workers for the purpose of buying the 'badil' jobs. The new system threatened their business. The strike continued.

5. The Government PW Workshops, Royapuram (Madras).

317 workers struck on the 24th July as a protest against the introduction of the 'Turn System'. The strike continued.

6. Sweepers of the Multan Municipality, Multan (Punjab).

The official report confirms the press report. The Municipal Committee are reported to have appointed a sub-committee to consider the sweepers' demands.

7. Bidi shops in the Bombay City.

The strike ended on the 29th July. The owners agreed *inter alia* to pay wages from Re. 1 to Re. 1-4 as per thousand bidis according to quality and not to make any deductions from wages for charity funds.

8. Mukund Iron and Steel Works Limited, Bombay.

All the 125 workers on day and night shifts in the rolling section struck on the 27th July, as a protest against the refusal of the management to provide light work to an injured worker. At a meeting of the strikers held on the following day certain demands were formulated which included full pay during absence due to injury received while at work, reduction in working hours and 15 days privilege leave in a year. On an assurance being given by the manager that he would look into all their grievances all the strikers resumed work on the 31st and the strike ended.

B-General

9. The Khatau Makanji Mill, Bombay, notified on the 17th July that the Reeling Department of the day shift, except two sheds, would be closed from 1st August on account of trade depression. This would affect about a 100 workers.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 32 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 17th August 1939

A-Strikes

1. Assam Oil Company at Digboi and Tinsukia (Assam).

The strike continued.

2. Seconee Tea Estate, Nowgong (Assam).

140 workers struck on the 30th June as a protest against the assault by the Superintendent on a woman worker for unsatisfactory work and for her refusal to work in the factory. On an assurance being given by the Deputy Commissioner that he would look into their grievances the strikers resumed work on the 3rd July and the strike ended.

3. Barahapjan Tea Estate, Barahapjan (Assam).

700 workers struck on the 14th July as a protest against the alleged short weighing of leaf. Work was resumed unconditionally on the 17th.

4. Carpenters of Behala and South Suburbs of Calcutta.

The strike ended on the 27th June. Some increase in wages and discontinuance of the customary deduction of 12½ per cent of the earnings of the workers were promised.

5. Dhakeshwari Cotton Mills, Nos. I and II (Bengal).

The strike ended on the 26th July as previously reported. The terms of the settlement provide *inter alia* for the re-instatement of the three discharged officials, a reduction of 25 per cent in the rent of the mills' quarters, the grant of Puja bonus from 1940 and no retrenchment.

6. Lever Brothers' Soap Factory, Kidderpore (Bengal).

The factory closed on the 4th August. At the instance of the Minister for Labour of the Provincial Government, it re-opened on the 12th and 180 strikers resumed work. The strike continued.

7. The India Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

The strike continued. The company hoped to restart work on the 14th August as a settlement was said to have been reached with the strikers.

8. The Reliance Pottery Works, Chanch (Bihar).

The strike continued.

9. The Government PW Workshops, Royapuram (Madras).

The strike ended on the 9th August when all the strikers resumed work unconditionally.

10. The Ambika Silk Mills Company Limited (Bombay).

160 weavers struck on the 7th August for the introduction of a fixed-wage system in lieu of the existing piece-rate system. On the following day the strikers were informed that the management were prepared to pay fixed daily wages, but the rates proposed were unacceptable to the strikers. As some workers in other departments joined the strike the mill closed. 345 hands were affected. The strikers were informed that if they did not resume work on the 9th their services would be dispensed with. The weaving department re-started work on the 10th with 60 new hands. The strike continued.

B-General

11. The Harishankar Narbheram Metal Works, Bombay, have notified that the services of all the 150 workers will be terminated with effect from the 3rd September 1939 on account of trade depression.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 33 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 24th August 1939

A-Strikes

1. Radha Kissen Cotton Mill, Howrah (Bengal)

The strike ended on the 14th August when the weaving department restarted work with 348 old hands.

2. Lever Brothers' Soap Factory, Kidderpore (Bengal).

231 strikers resumed work unconditionally by the 14th August. The strike continued.

3. India Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal)

The strike ended on the 14th August when work was resumed unconditionally. Some minor concessions were, however, granted.

4. Shamnagar North Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

700 operatives struck on the 11th August for the grant of food allowance and as a protest against the sealing of looms. 4500 persons were affected. The mill continued to remain closed and the strike continued.

5. The Choolai Mills (Madras Spinning and Weaving Mills Company Limited), Choolai (Madras).

The mills have gone into voluntary liquidation. The strike may be considered to have ended.

6. The Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company Limited, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam District (Madras).

The strike ended on the 24th May as a result of an agreement reached between the parties. The terms of settlement provide for the re-employment of the strikers who were employed on the 14th February 1939, 10 days holidays in a year, 15 days notice of discharge, preference to retrenched hands while filling up future vacancies and recognition of the workers' union provided the new executive of the union agree to abide by the rules laid down by the management.

7. The fibre workers at Cocanada (Madras).

The strike ended on the 24th April 1939. The arbitrator gave his award on the 24th May.

8. The Ambika Silk Mills Company Limited (Bombay).

On the 11th August 50 of the 60 new hands engaged struck and the mill closed again. The strike continued.

9. The Silver Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mills Company Limited, Ahmedabad (Bombay).

Between the 9th and 12th August 124 weavers struck in sympathy with 8 jobbers who had been replaced. New hands have been engaged in place of the strikers. The strike continued.

10. Bharat Rubber Works, Jogeshwari (Bombay).

All the 50 workers of the shoe-making department struck on the 11th August as a protest against the discharge without notice of 85 temporary workers. The factory had to be closed. 257 persons were affected. The strikers were also reported to be now demanding an increase in wages.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 34 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 31st August 1939

A-Strikes

1. Umbrella Stick Factory, Champatala, Calcutta.

It is now reported that 85 persons only were involved in the strike. 50 strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 8th August and the remainder on the 10th and 11th.

2. Lever Brothers'. Soap Factory, Kidderpore (Bengal).

The strike ended on the 14th August. 19 strikers who did not resume work by that day will not be re-employed.

3. Mohini Mill, Kushtia (Bengal).

2800 workers struck on the 4th August as a protest against the suspension of a worker for insubordination. Their other demands related to the closing of the 'c' shift, increase in wages, maternity benefit, privilege leave and recognition of their union. The strike continued.

4. Shamnagar North Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

The strike continued.

5. Messrs. S.C. Mousall & Co. Leather merchants, Entally, Calcutta.

130 workers struck on the 19th August as a protest against the company's decision to employ about 60 persons daily as work had decreased owing to ban weather conditions and demanding the employment of all the hands for half the day and the suppression of bribery. 116 strikers were employed on the 23rd. Some new hands were also engaged.

6. Lakshmi Narayan Cotton Mill, Dacca (Bengal).

1000 operatives struck on the 16th August for regular payment of wages, grant of general increment and for a minimum wage of Rs 15. The strike continued.

7. Bangeswari Cotton Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

833 workers struck on the 22nd August for the withdrawal of an order suspending a mistri for insubordination, for the dismissal of an overseer for alleged ill treatment and for an increase in the rate of wages for a particular variety of cloth. The strike continued.

8. Swadeshi Silk Industries Ltd., 24 Parganas (Bengal).

26 night shift workers struck on the 18th August as a protest against the suspension of 2 workers for unsatisfactory work and for general increment. On the 21st, 498 other workers joined the strikers. The strike continued.

9. The Ambika Silk Mills Company Limited, Bombay.

The Government Labour Officer who interviewed the parties suggested that the case should be referred to the Commissioner of Labour and that work in the meanwhile

should be resumed. The employers were however unwilling to reinstate 9 of the strikers while the strikers were, not prepared to resume work unless the nine strikers were reinstated. The strike continued.

10. The Silver Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mill, Ahmedabad (Bombay).

By the 15th August 101 more weavers joined the strike. The strike continued.

11. The Bharat Rubber Works, Jogeshwari (Bombay).

The strike continued.

12. Handloom factories at Ankleshwar, Broach District (Bombay).

From the 15th to the 17th August, 198 workers employed in 6 handloom factories struck as a protest against cut in wages for Sundays and holidays. The strike continued.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 35 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 7th September 1939

A-Strikes

1. Mohini Mill, Kushtia (Bengal).

The strike continued.

2. Shamnagar North Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

Work was restarted unconditionally on the 30th August and the strike ended. 1000 strikers who did not resume work were replaced by new hands.

3. Messrs S.C. Mousall and Company, Leather merchants, Entally, Calcutta.

The strike ended on the 23rd August. The result was unsuccessful for the strikers.

4. Bangeswari Cotton Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

The strike continued.

5. Swadeshi Silk Industries Limited, 24 Parganas (Bengal).

The factory closed and the strike continued.

6. Brass Utensil workers of Munshigunj Sub-division (Bengal).

200 workers struck on the 14th August as a protest against reduction in the rates of wages.

7. Jute Mill of the Calcutta Jute Manufacturing Company, Limited (Bengal).

500 workers struck on the 29th August for increase in wages and the mill closed. 1700 workers were affected. The strike continued.

8. Sweepers of the Municipal Board, Bahraich (United Provinces)

180 sweepers struck on the 22nd August for increase in wages. They also demanded that they should be allowed to keep the night soil carts in the municipal compound. The strike continued.

9. The New Victoria Mills Company Limited, Cawnpore (United Provinces)

The strike ended on the 5th June 1939 when work was resumed as a result of arbitration by the Labour Commissioner, United Provinces who held *inter alia* that the retrenchment was justified but the notices of discharge should have been served normally on the juniors and that the retrenched men should be given preference in filling future vacancies.

10. The Ambika Silk Mills Limited, Bombay.

The strike ended on the 26th August when all the strikers resumed work as a result of an agreement which was reached through the intervention of the Government Labour Officer. The terms of settlement provide for *inter alia* the re-employment of the nine workers in question and the payment of wages to weavers for July and August at the rates settled in July last in the Court of the Chief Conciliator. Thereafter both winders and

weavers would be paid at place work rates fixed in consultation with representatives of the workers.

11. The Silver Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mill, Ahmedabad (Bombay).

The strikers were paid their outstanding wages on the 19th August and the strike ended.

12. Handloom factories at Ankleshwar, Broach District (Bombay).

From the 23rd to the 26th August 92 strikers resumed work unconditionally. The strike continued.

13. The Bombay Suryodaya Mill

is reported to have put up a notice on the 28th August to the effect that the mill would be closed from the 18th September on account of trade depression. This will effect about 1200 hands.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 36 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 14th September 1939

A-Strikes

1. Mohini Mill Kushtia (Bengal).

The strike continued.

2. Shamnagar North Jute Mill, Hooghly (Bengal).

273 workers were also dismissed.

3. Lakshmi Narayan Cotton Mill, Dacca (Bengal), (Press report).

The strike was called off on the 1st September after both parties had agreed to refer the dispute to an arbitration board.

4. Bangeswari Cotton Mill Hooghly (Bengal).

The strike ended on the 1st September when the suspended man was allowed to resume work.

5. Swadeshi Silk Industries Limited, 24 Parganas (Bengal).

The strike continued.

6. Jute Mill of the Calcutta Jute Manufacturing Company Limited (Bengal).

The strike continued.

7. The Indian Steel and Wire Products Company Limited, Jamshedpur (Bihar).

About 395 workers are involved in the strike. On the formation of a Trade Union on the 7th August a list of 24 demands was drawn up. The chief demands relate to the provision of quarters, accident leave with pay, profit-sharing bonus, gratuity or old age pension, medical leave, maternity benefits and recognition of the union. The strike continued.

8. The Bharat Rubber Works, Jogeshwari (Bombay).

The factory continued to remain closed and the strike continued.

9. Handloom factories at Ankleshwar, Broach District (Bombay).

From the 28th to 30th August 54 more strikers resumed work unconditionally. The strike continued.

10. Mohanlal Hargovind Bidi Works, Jubbulpore (Central Provinces and Berar).

350 workers struck on the 27th July as a protest against the imposition of fines on certain workers for bad work. The fines were later refunded and the strikers resumed work on the 4th August. The strike ended.

11. Coir Factory of Messrs. Pieres Leslie and Company, British Cochin (Madras).

631 workers struck on the 24th August for higher rates of wages for making superior coir yarn and for the reinstatement of 150 coolies who had been replaced by Mopla coolies by the contractor of the firm. A settlement was reached through the intervention of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate and the strike ended on the 7th September. The terms of settlement are not yet available.

12. Sweepers of the Agra Municipal Board, Agra (United Provinces).

864 sweepers struck on the 27th July as a protest against the introduction of the contract for the removal of night soil and rubbish by mechanical transport. They also demanded the dismissal of the workers appointed during the previous strike and the provision of light and water. On an assurance being given that the first and third demands would be considered the strikers resumed work on the 2nd August and the strike ended.

13. Sweepers of the Municipal Board, Bahraich (United Provinces).

On the Chairman's assurance that he would try to get the Board to sanction an increase of Re. 1 in their salaries work was resumed on the 24th August and the strike ended.

14. The New Victoria Mills, Cawnpore (United Provinces).

3247 workers struck on the 27th July for the stoppage of retrenchment of old hands, full week's work to every worker and re-employment of workers already retrenched. The strike continued.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 37 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 21st September 1939

A-Strikes

1. Assam Oil Company at Digboi and Tinsukia.

The strike continued.

2. Mohini Mill, Kushtia.

The strike continued.

3. Lakshmi Narayan Cotton Mill, Dacca.

The official report confirms the press report regarding the date of termination of the strike.

4. Swadeshi Silk Industries Limited, 24 Parganas.

The strike ended on the 1st September in favour of the strikers. Details of settlement are awaited.

5. Brass Utensil Workers of Munshigunj Sub-Division.

It is now reported that 250 workers struck on the 10th August. Work was resumed on the 22nd August on the management agreeing to give an increase of half an *anna* in the rates of wages. The strike ended.

6. Jute Mill of the Calcutta Jute Manufacturing Company, Limited.

The strike continued.

7. Burn and Company's Engineering Workshop, Howrah.

350 workers employed under contractors struck on the 1st September for direct employment and for payment at daily rates instead of at piece rates. By the 4th September the number on strike increased to 2350 but fell to 1000 on the 6th. On the following day all the strikers, except 100, resumed work unconditionally. The remainder resumed work on the 11th and the strike ended.

Bihar

8. Indian Steel and Wire Products Company Limited, Jamshedpur.

The management recommenced work on the 6th September and the number at work on that date was 1947 including a large number of strikers. The remaining strikers have intimated to the Labour Union that if the dispute is not settled soon they will return to work.

Bombay

9. The Bharat Rubber Works, Jogeshwari.

The factory continued to remain closed and the strike continued.

10. Handloom factories at Ankleshwar, Broach District.

26 more strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 4th September. As the remaining strikers were reported to have taken up work elsewhere and the proprietors also were not in need of any more hands the strike may be considered to have come to an end on the 6th September.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 38 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 28th September 1939

A-Strikes

Assam

1. Assam Oil Company at Digboi and Tinsukia.

The strike continued.

Bengal

2. Mohini Mill, Kushtia.

The strike continued.

3. Swadeshi Silk Industries Limited, 24 Parganas.

The terms of agreement provided that the higher rates which prevailed about three months ago would be given only to those workers whose outturn came up to a certain standard.

4. Jute Mill of the Calcutta Jute Manufacturing Company Limited.

The strike ended on the 18th September when work was resumed following an assurance given by the Assistant Labour Commissioner to the strikers that he would take up their case with the management.

Bombay

5. The Bharat Rubber Works, Jogeshwari.

The factory continued to remain closed and the strike continued.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 39 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 12th October 1939

A-Strikes

Bombay

1. The Bharat Rubber Works, Jogeshwari.

The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 2nd October and the strike ended.

2. Handloom factories at Sholapur.

400 workers employed in 8 handloom factories struck on the 21st September apprehending reduction in wages due to rise in prices of raw material. 307 strikers resumed work unconditionally on the following day and the remainder in batches from the 23rd to the 26th and the strike ended.

3. Mohini Mill, Kushtia.

The strike continued.

4. Lakshmi Narayan Cotton Mill, Dacca.

The terms of settlement provided for no victimization, payment of wages for a portion of the strike period, a general increase of Re. 1 per mensem for those getting less than Rs 15 per mensem, payment of minimum wages and recognition of the union.

5. Wire net workers of Calcutta.

500 workers employed in several small factories struck on the 18th September for higher wages, better conditions of service and recognition of their union.

6. Jute firms of Chaumchani, Noakhali.

2000 workers struck on the 20th September for higher wages. Through the intervention of the District Magistrate the strikers resumed work in batches from the 21st to the 25th September and the strike ended. The demand was partially conceded.

7. Anglo-India Jute Mills, 24 Parganas.

The weavers of the Lower and Middle mills struck on the 3rd October for higher wages or war bonus. The weavers of the Jagatdal mill joined the strikers on the following day but the mills except the Middle Mill worked with a depleted staff. On the 5th the strike spread to the Upper Mill and all the 4 mills closed. 9697 hands were affected. The strike continued.

8. Delta Jute Mill, Howrah.

Following the success of a short-lived strike in the mill on the 27th September for an increase in wages in which 126 women workers were involved a number of workers struck on the 29th September for higher wages. The mill closed. 2884 workers were affected.

Central Provinces and Berar

9. Bidi factories at Bhandara.

444 workers employed in 4 bidi factories struck on the 21st August as a protest against the charging for cost of thread and reduction in wages. Through the intervention of the Government Labour Officer the strikers resumed work on the 5th September under old conditions pending the decision of the Government on the recommendations of the Bidi Industrial Committee shortly to be appointed.

10. Bidi factories at Damoh.

1000 workers employed in 4 factories struck on the 14th August as a protest against certain deductions from wages and non-payment for rejected bidis. 500 strikers of 3 factories resumed work on the 3rd September and the remaining 500 strikers of the fourth factory on the 6th as a result of a settlement which was reached. The terms of settlement are not known.

Madras

11. Coir Factory of Messrs. Pierce Leslie & Company, British Cochin.

The strike ended on the company agreeing to re-employ all the coolies in the robanking and sorting department.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 40 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 19th October 1939

A-Strikes

Assam

1. Assam Oil Company at Digboi and Tinsukia.

A Conciliation Board and an Inquiry Committee to examine the whole course of the strike were appointed by the Government of Assam. The publication of the report of the former has been hold up pending the receipt of the report of the latter which is expected shortly. With the declaration of the Digboi Tinsukia oil fields as a protected area under the Defence of India Ordinance and the removal of certain leaders from the area, the strike collapsed and the company obtained all the old labour it required. The men for whom no work was available were repatriated and were given their railway fares and a bonus and a bonus of Rs 15 per head. Their Provident Fund accumulations are also being remitted to their homes. The strike is considered to have ended during the first week of September.

Bengal

2. Mohini Mill, Kushtia.

The mill re-started work with local workers on the 13th October. Certain workers believed to be ring leaders have been discharged. The mill will work 2 shifts a day of 9 hours each.

3. Wire net workers of Calcutta.

The strikers of 2 firms resumed work on the 6th October.

4. Anglo-India Jute Mills, 24 Parganas.

The Minister for Labour has ordered an enquiry into the grievances of the strikers and following his advice all the strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 11th October and the strike ended.

5. Nadia Jute Mill, 24 Parganas.

550 workers struck on the 7th October as a protest against reduction in wages. The strike ended on the 10th when the strikers resumed work unconditionally.

6. Handloom weavers of Faridpur.

100 weavers struck on the 14th October for higher wages. The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 23rd and the strike ended.

7. Delta Jute Mill, Howrah. The strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 2nd October and the strike ended.

United Provinces

8. General strike in Cawnpore Mills, Cawnpore. The General Council of the Mazdoor Sabha (Labour Union) declared a general strike on the 2nd October with a view to force a solution of the dispute in the New Victoria Mills which related to reduction of wages and re-employment.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 41 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 26th October 1939

A-Strikes

Central Provinces and Berar.

1. Bidi factories in Hatta.

All the 175 workers employed in 6 bidi firms struck between the 1st and 6th September for payment at the rate of 6 annas for 1000 bidis, abolition of certain deductions and supply of tobacco at the rate of 20 chhataks instead of 18 for making 1000 bidis. The strike ended on the 10th September. Four firms conceded the demands of the strikers. The strikers of the other two firms have been employed by the four firms.

Madras

2. Associated Printers, Mount Road, Madras.

423 workers struck on the 16th October as a protest against retrenchment and a proposal to place the remaining staff on a daily rate basis. The strike continued.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 42 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 2nd November 1939

A-Strikes

Bihar

1. The Reliance Fire-brick and Pottery Works, Chanch, Dhanbad.

The strike ended on the 9th August when all the strikers resumed work unconditionally. The number on strike was 700 and not 600 as previously stated.

2. Basdeopur Peninsular Tobacco Factory, Monghyr.

The workers of the case making department staged a stay-in-strike on the 28th August as a protest against the suspension of 9 workers for disobedience of orders and the withholding of tickets of 15 workers for incomplete work on the 26th. The strike spread to other sections by the 31st, and the factory closed. 2000 workers were affected. Through the intervention of the Parliamentary Secretary for Labour, the parties agreed on the 2nd September to refer the dispute to arbitration and work was resumed on the 5th.

Central Provinces and Berar

3. Bidi factories of Haji Latif Gani, Tirora.

538 workers employed in 7 factories struck between the 9th to 11th October for higher wages. On the manager of the factories agreeing to persuade the proprietor to pay at the rates prevailing in other factories all the strikers resumed work on the 14th and the strike ended.

Madras

4. Associated Printers, Mount Road, Madras.

The strike continued.

Sind

5. Dalmia Cement Factory, Karachi.

38 workers on the night shift struck on the 23rd October as a protest against reduction in wages, dismissal of three of their colleagues and non-recognition of the president of their union. The remaining 412 workers joined the strike. The strike continued.

B-General

Bombay

6. The management of the Sir Shapurji Broacha Mills Limited, Bombay have notified that the Connaught Mill, Bombay, would be closed from the 20th November, on account of trade depression. This will affect about 225 workers.

7. Lists of the following are enclosed:

- (i) Bombay Mills working night shift on the 27th October 1939.
- (ii) Ahmedabad Mills working night shift on the 1st October 1939.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 43 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 9th November 1939

A-Strikes

Bengal

1. Wire net workers of Calcutta.

The strikers who had resumed work struck again on the 9th October. By the 23rd the situation improved and 23 factories were working normally. The strike appears to have ended by that date.

2. Anglo-India Jute Mills, 24 Parganas.

The number of workers affected is now stated to be 10,900.

3. Handloom weavers of Faridpore.

The dates of commencement and termination of the strike were the 14th and 23rd September respectively.

4. Rope Factory workers of Cossipore.

1237 workers employed in 14 factories struck on the 17th October for increase in wages. On an assurance being given that the demand would be considered all the strikers resumed work by the 23rd and the strike ended.

5. United Rubber Co. Ltd., Calcutta.

300 workers staged a stay-in-strike on the 27th October for the payment of arrear wages. They left the premises later on the advice of the police. The strike ended on the 30th when the arrears were paid.

6. Luxmi Jute Mill, Calcutta.

400 workers struck on the 17th October as a protest against the dismissal of 2 of their colleagues. They also demanded higher wages and better facilities. The mill closed on the 23rd. 1700 workers were affected. Work was resumed on the 25th on an assurance being given that the demands would be considered.

Bombay

7. The Indian Woollen Mill, Bombay.

610 workers on day shift struck on the 2nd November as a protest against the refusal of the management to grant a war allowance and the mill had to be closed. The management

notified that if the strikers did not resume work on the following day they would be held liable to penalties under the Payment of Wages Act. All the workers on night shift joined the strikers. 985 hands were affected. The strike continued.

B-General

8. The Sassoon and Alliance Silk Mill, Bombay, notified that its third shift would be closed with effect from the 17th November. This will affect about 300 workers.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 44 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 16th November 1939

A-Strikes

Bengal

1. Luxmi Jute Mill, Calcutta.

200 workers struck on the 2nd November as a protest against the dismissal of their overseer. The strike ended on the 6th when work was resumed unconditionally.

2. Jute Mills in Bengal (Official and Press Reports).

About 36,000 workers employed in 10 jute mills in Naihati, the 24 Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah Districts struck between the 6th and 14th November for an increase of one anna and six pies in the rupee in their wages. The Committee of the Indian Jute Mills' Association have decided to increase the wages of the workers in the various jute mills under the Association by 10 per cent, with the retrospective effect from the 6th November. 8000 workers in one mill resumed work on the 15th on being informed of the Association's decision.

Central Provinces and Berar

3. Raja Gokuldas Mills Limited, Jubbulpore.

The strike appears to have ended on the 11th September with the withdrawal of picketing by the workers' union. The mill has closed.

United Provinces

4. Glass Factories at Ferozabad.

As an answer to the demands put forward by the Mazdoor Sabha (Labour Union) on behalf of the workers, the owners of all the 23 factories decided to close the factories on the 24th August. 8000 workers were affected. The dispute was settled on the 7th October by the arbitration of 10 private persons. The parties accepted the award which related to wages, working hours and daily output and the strike ended.

Madras

5. Associated Printers, Mount Road, Madras.

164 strikers are reported to have resumed work accepting the system of daily wages. A majority of the compositors are still holding out.

Bombay

6. Premier Hosiery Works, Calicut.

150 workers struck on the 17th October following the rejection of their demands which *inter alia* related to the recognition of their union, security of service, stoppage of the

contract system, annual increment and minimum pay. Through the intervention of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate the parties agreed to refer the dispute to arbitration and the strike was called off on the 23rd.

7. The Indian Woollen Mill, Bombay.

The Commissioner of Labour having agreed to take the dispute in conciliation and to examine the question of the withdrawal of the notice put up by the management under the Payment of Wages Act, all the strikers resumed work on the 8th November and the strike ended.

B-General

8. The Manhar Silk Mills, Bombay, have notified that the night shift would be closed with effect from the 1st December on account of trade depression. This will affect 120 hands.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 45 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 23rd November 1939

A-Strikes

Bengal

1. Jute Mills in Bengal. The strikers of 5 other mills resumed work by the 16th November. The strikes in the (1) Hastings Jute Mill, Hooghly, involving 4,340 hands and in the (2) Union North Jute Mill, Calcutta, involving 2000 hands, continued.
2. Hukumchand Jute Mill, 24 Parganas. (Official and Press Report).
11,000 operatives struck on the 8th November for the restoration of an alleged cut of 17½ per cent in wages. They resumed work on the 17th when they were informed of the Jute Mills' Association's decision to grant an increase of 10 per cent in their wages.

Bombay

3. The Simplex Mill, Bombay.
All the 200 women winders staged a stay-in-strike on the 14th November for the restoration of the old piece-rates. At the instigation of the women strikers 400 male workers also struck in the afternoon. After the closing time, only the male strikers left the mill premises and the mill closed on the following day. 2290 hands were affected. An agreement was reached on the 16th between the mill agents and the representative of the strikers to refer the dispute for settlement to an arbitrator appointed by Government.

Central Provinces and Berar

4. Bidi factory of Haji Mir Saheb Niyaz Ali, Mundikota.
All the 177 workers struck on the 17th October for an increase in the rates of wages. On an assurance being given by the manager that the present rate would be modified the strikers resumed work on the 1st November and the strike ended.

Sind

5. The Dalmia Cement Factory, Karachi.
The strike ended on the 1st November. The parties have referred the points in dispute to the Minister in charge of Labour for a final decision.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 46 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 30th November 1939

A-Strikes

Bengal

1. Jute Mills in Bengal.

The strikers of 2 other mills resumed work by the 23rd November 1939.

2. Union South Jute Mill, 24 Parganas.

300 hemmers and Sewers struck on 22nd November as a protest against the new arrangement by which the management are to pay the coolies engaged to assist the workers at the rate of 6 annas and the amount thus spent is to be recouped by deduction from the wages of the workers and against the previous arrangement under which the workers themselves paid the coolies at the rate of 5 annas. The strike continued.

3. Gouripore Welding Company, 24 Parganas. 208 workers struck on the 18th November demanding higher wages on the ground of the present higher prices. 9 more workers joined the strike on the 19th. The strike continued.

Bombay

4. The Simplex Mill, Bombay.

The strike ended on the 18th November when all the strikers resumed work.

5. The Simplex Mills, Bombay.

600 weavers struck on the 21st November as a protest against the refusal of the management to put up a notice granting an increase in wages. The management informed the strikers that individual case would be examined carefully and this did not satisfy the strikers. On the 23rd the management notified that increased rates would be paid, with effect from the 1st November for certain kinds of cloth. The strike continued.

Central Provinces and Berar

6. Sweepers of the Municipal Committee, Damoh.

120 of the 126 sweepers employed by the committee struck on the 4th November following the rejection of their demands which related *inter alia* to increase in pay, supply of clothes and quarters and grant of leave, pension and gratuity. Work was carried on with the help of sweepers imported from other places. 31 strikers resumed work on the 7th. The remaining strikers are willing to resume work but they have not yet been re-employed.

Punjab

Shoe-makers at Amritsar. 600 shoe-makers working under shoe merchants struck on the 19th November for an increase in the price of manufactured goods corresponding to the rise in the price of new materials due to war conditions. The shoe merchants having agreed to consider the demands of the strikers, the strike was called off on the 26th November.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 47 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 7th December 1939

A-Strikes

Bengal

1. Hukumchand Jute Mill, 24 Parganas.

The strike is now reported to have ended on the 16th November. An increase of 19 pies in the rupee was granted.

2. Union North Jute Mill, Calcutta.

2400 workers (not 2000 as previously reported) were involved. The strike ended on the 15th November. Wages were increased by 10 per cent, under Jute Mills Association's decision to grant a general increase.

3. Union South Jute Mill, 24 Parganas. The strike ended on the 25th November when all the strikers except 12 hemmers who were retrenched resumed work. The Labour Commissioner is examining their rates on the basis of those prevailing in other mills.

4. Ghewar Bazar Jute Firm, Faridpur. 850 workers struck on the 16th November for higher wages. The strike ended on the 19th. Some increase in wages was granted.

Bihar

5. The Indian Steel and Wire Products Company Limited, Jamshedpur.

The remaining strikers, except 6 whom the management refused to take back, resumed work by the middle of September and the strike ended.

United Provinces

6. R.G. Cotton Mills, Lucknow.

200 operatives on day shift struck on the 27th November following the refusal of the manager to reinstate the dismissed workers and to give an assurance that no reduction in wages would be made. Later 300 workers on night shift and 150 more workers on day shift joined the strike. The strike continued.

Bombay

7. The Simplex Mill, Bombay. The strike ended on the 24th November when all the strikers resumed work.

B-General

8. The Kamala Mill, Bombay, have notified that the mill would be closed with effect from the 21st December for want of orders. This will affect about 1850 hands.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 48 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 14th December 1939

A-Strikes

1. Gouripore Welding Company, 24 Parganas.

The management notified the strikers that unless they resumed work by the 27th November they would be treated as having left their jobs. The strikers were also informed that, if they resumed work within the specified time, such of their demands as were reasonable would be considered. This did not, however, produce the desired effect. The strike continued.

2. Gouripore Jute Mill, 24 Parganas.

50 winders struck on the 30th November for higher wages. 70 more struck on the following day and the mill closed. 4920 workers were affected. It is understood that the mill opened on 9th December.

3. Muranka Paint and Varnish Works, 24 Parganas.

117 workers struck on the 29th November for an increase of 2 annas in the rates of wages for overtime work and a minimum daily wage rates of annas twelve. The strike ended on the 5th December. An increase of one anna was granted.

4. Bengal Nagpur Railway Yard at Shalimar.

450 workers struck on the 24th November as a protest against the transfer of the old hands from one shed to another which was ordered in the interest of work. There had also been discontentment among the workers for sometime past in regard to wages and hours of work. The strike continued.

Madras

5. Associated Printers, Mount Road.

The Press is working with 200 men of whom 165 are workers and the rest are clerks and menials. The strike has collapsed.

6. Kumaran Mills, Pudupalayam, Coimbatore.

All the 80 workers on night shift struck on the 1st December as a protest against the refusal of the management to redress their grievances which *inter alia* related to re-employment of dismissed workers, regular payment of wages, regulation of hours of night shift work and rates of wages. All the 160 workers on day shift joined the strike. The strike continued.

United Provinces

7. R.G. Cotton Mills, Lucknow.

The number on strike on the 29th November was 1,000. The strike continued.

Bombay

8. Asbestos Cement Company, Limited, Muland.

The workers on night shift struck on the 30th November for an increase in wages on account of the rise in prices due to war. The other workers joined the strike on the following day. 522 workers were involved. Accepting the agreement reached between the management and the local congress workers that work should be resumed pending settlement of the dispute by the Commissioner of Labour the strikers resumed work, on the 5th December and the strike ended.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 49 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 21st December 1939

A-Strikes

Bengal

1. Wire net workers of Calcutta.

The exact date of termination of the strike is not yet known. The strikers have, however, resumed work on the assurance that an increase of 6 pies in the rupee would be granted.

2. Gouripore Welding Company, 24 Parganas.

The strike ended on the 8th December. Sixty per cent of the strikers resumed work unconditionally on the 7th and the remainder on the following day.

3. Gouripore Jute Mill, 24 Parganas.

The strike ended on the 9th December when the strikers resumed work unconditionally.

4. Bengal Nagpur Railway Yard at Shalimar.

Most of the strikers are now being offered the chance to resume work upon signing a new agreement. Certain workers will not, however, be re-employed. The strike continued.

5. National Tobacco Company's Factory, 24 Parganas.

486 workers struck on the 11th December for the re-instatement of 34 dismissed workers of the Packing Department and an increase in wages. The strike ended on the 14th December. On the advice of the Labour Commissioner the management agreed to re-employ the dismissed workers and to grant an increase if the average weekly earnings of the workers of the packing department fell below Rs 4/8. Agreement was also reached on matters relating to retrenchment of workers and to the giving of notice by the workers before resorting to strikes.

Madras

6. Kumaran Mills, Pudupalayam, Coimbatore District.

The mills closed on the 8th December. The strike continued.

Chittivalsa Jute Mills Company, Limited, Chittivalsa, Vizagapatam District. All the 405 carters struck on the 11th December for an increase in wages. The strike continued.

United Provinces

7. R.G. Cotton Mills, Lucknow.

The strike ended on the 10th December. 1000 operatives are working in the mills. The management have decided not to re-employ certain workers who were creating disaffection.

B-General

Bombay

8. The New Prahlad Mill, Bombay, have notified the workers in the reeling and bundling departments that their services would be dispensed with effect from the 21st December 1939 on account of shortage of warp. This will affect about 125 hands.

Weekly Review of Labour Situation No. 50 of 1939, summarizing information received during the week ending the 28th December 1939

A-Strikes

Bengal

1. Wire net workers of Calcutta.

The number of strikers is stated to be 376 only. The strike ended by the 29th October.

2. Bengal Nagpur Railway Yard at Shalimar.

By the 20th December all the strikers were re-employed.

3. Hukumchand Electric Steel Works, Calcutta (Press Report).

1000 workers struck on the 19th December for the grant of increment and war bonus.

Central Provinces and Berar

4. The Mulji Sicca and Co.'s Bidi Factory at Tumsar, District Bhandara.

All the 275 workers struck on the 22nd November as a protest against deduction in wages for failure to make 1000 bidis with 5 chataks of tobacco. All the strikers are reported to have obtained work in other bidi firms by 12th December.

Chapter 6. National Politics (Nationalist)

I JANUARY–MARCH

1. Elections to the Congress Annual Session: 'The Election'

Independent India, 1 January 1939.

1 January 1939

The enrolment of members for the year is over.¹ Now everybody is preparing for the election of delegates to the annual session of the Congress.² That election is the most important event of the internal life of the Congress. It is only on that occasion that the membership gets the opportunity of asserting itself. The result of the election may radically change the policy of the Congress and consequently decisively influence political developments in the near future. There is a good deal of discontent with the state of affairs inside the Congress. Disapproval of the policy pursued by the leaders is widespread. The leadership itself is rapidly going down in the estimation of the more intelligent and politically conscious members of the Congress. It remains in power by virtue of the control of the party machinery. That being the case, the coming election might be a turning point in the history of the Congress. But there must be other conditions before that could happen.

The nature of the great bulk of the membership itself stands in the way of the urgently needed change in the internal life of the Congress. Most of it is politically non-existent. And no effort is made to remove that fundamental weakness which may turn out to be fatal. There is still another factor which deprives the election of all its political significance. That is bogus membership. Owing to these two factors—political backwardness and bogus membership—the Congress as an organization has its being in an atmosphere of unreality. On the other hand, it is from this very unreality that the present leadership draws its power. Therefore, the present leadership, which has its ramifications throughout the organization, militates against the political development and organizational consolidation of the Congress.

The result of the enrolment this year has placed before the Congressmen an enigma. The enrolment during the period fixed originally was very discouraging. Everywhere there was a slump, if not an actual decline. The situation was due to disappointments. Instead of learning from the experience, an easy way was found out of the situation. The period of enrolment was extended by a month and the miracle happened. All of a sudden, optimistic reports came in from all sides. In the course of a month not only was the last year's reached, but, in many places, there was a large increase of membership.

How did that happen? Nothing had occurred in the meantime to bring about a radical change in the mood of the people. The only plausible explanation is that the enrolment during the extended period was mostly bogus. That is not a mere inference but a palpable fact. There are two types of bogus membership. One method is to fill in receipt books with fictitious names. The other is mass enrolment of altogether uninterested people by those having some control over them. With such membership, no election can have any meaning. For one thing, only a small fraction of the number of the rolls will actually participate in the election, and secondly, most of those coming to the polls with vote as they are told by those who had enrolled them, often paying even their membership fee.

Time and again, we have exposed these corrupt practices and suggested remedies. We revert to the subject, hoping that even at this eleventh hour a supreme effort will be made by those who are interested to transforming this apparently imposing castle built on sand into a political organization of the consciously revolutionary vanguard of the Indian people. The first thing to be done for that purpose is to create the most minimum degree of political consciousness among the rank and file membership. That can be done by holding periodical meetings of the newly enrolled members as often as possible. The usual mass meetings will not serve the purpose. Small groups of Congress members should meet together and the political programme of the Congress explained to them in the most simple language. The members must be made conscious of their democratic rights, and their responsibility should be clearly explained to them. After this preliminary political education, they should be given the opportunity for discussing all the outstanding problems of our movement and express their opinion. If all the lower Congress Committees act energetically according to this simple plan, the election will lost its fictitious character, at least to some extent.

For the active radical Congress workers, the supreme task of the moment is to carry on a systematic election campaign. Political and organizational issues must be clarified. The conflict of ideas and ideals should be explained to the entire membership. In short, the rank and file member should be helped to elect the delegates to the Congress intelligently.

The average Congressmen, recruited mostly from the peasantry or other sections of the toiling masses, will grasp the larger political and organizational problems only when they will be approached from the point of view of the redress of their daily grievances. The increasing disappointment and discontent at the failure of the Congress Ministries to implement the election pledges can be easily transformed into political power. Instead of deceptive propaganda for retaining the shaken confidence of the masses, we should take the masses into confidence and explain to them why Congress Ministries have failed to give them satisfaction. Of course, this path of honesty and truthfulness cannot be travelled by the confirmed parliamentarians. But if they are not opposed, the Congress will be decomposed before long. You cannot deceive all the people for all the time. The parliamentarians may still hold out promises and exploit the credulity of the masses. But the imperialist constitution and Gandhist (Sic) ideology will not permit them to do anything for the real welfare of the masses. The only guarantee against the danger of decomposition of the Congress is to make the masses, particularly its rank and file membership, understand the real situation. The election campaign presents an opportunity for doing that. We advise active radical Congressmen to avail of it.

The primary members should be helped to express their opinion regarding what the masses expect the Congress Ministries to do for them. The minimum demands of the masses should be formulated in membership meetings. And the central slogan of the election campaign should be: Elect only those who endorse those demands and press for their enforcement by the Congress Ministries. Of course, ministerialists will appear on the scene with their usual demagoguery. They should be asked what they have hitherto done to implement the promises that they made during the election to the Legislative Assemblies. If they gave any other explanation than the inability of

any ministry to promote the welfare of the masses..., the radical Congressmen should have no hesitation in warning the masses against the purposeful deception. That must be done in order to defend the good name of the Congress. Those having the requisite independence and fearlessness should be regarded as real Congressmen trying to combat the evil influence of others betraying their ideal and principles of the Congress.

Unfortunately, the neo-constitutionalists deviation is percolating down even to the lower tank of the Congress. It must be combated and the most effective method of doing that is to help the rank and file realize the powerlessness of ministries under the Imperialist Constitution. Should the ministerialists be so stupid as to dispute that, they would only plead guilty to the charge of having purposefully neglected to fulfil their election pledges. But for the prestige of the Congress as a whole, the true Congressmen should defend the ministerialists against their own stupidity and shortsightedness. Having formulated the most pressing partial demands of the masses, such as specified substantial reduction of rent, curtailment of the feudal rights and privileges of the landlords, living wages for the industrial and agricultural labourers, freedom of association, right to withhold labour, immediate introduction of free primary education, democratization of local self-government, such revision of taxation as to shift the burden from the poor to the rich, it should be explained that, under the given constitution, no Ministry has the power to enforce any one of these demands. The propaganda will lead up to two obvious convulsions: (1) the futility of neo-constitutionalism, and (2) the necessity of mobilizing the masses for the higher form of struggle with the express object of overthrowing the Imperialist State. Candidates standing for election should be asked to commit themselves on both the accounts. If a sufficiently large number of delegates so committed could be returned in the next election, the development of our struggle in the near future will have a much better perspective.

Systematic efforts should be made to compel every candidate to appear before the members with whose vote he wishes to be elected a delegate. He must be compelled to make a frank confession of his political faith. Other Congressmen should claim the right and have the courage to explain the implication of whatever the candidate may have to say. That is the only way to combat demagogy and hypocrisy. Nobody, however great, should be allowed to preach false ideals and raise irrelevant issues. The Congress will meet in the annual session with the purpose of deciding all-important political issues. The delegates should be chosen on the merit of their political conviction. Once for all the definition of a true Congressman must be given to those who are required to discriminate between the genuine and the counterfeit. It should be told frankly that the usual claptrap preached by this latter variety has nothing to do with the programme of the Congress, which is to secure political freedom as the condition for economic betterment and social progress of the Indian people. The orthodox Congress propaganda has cultivated the habit of worshipping tin-gods. The clay feet of these fraudulent deities should be exposed. The rank and file Congressmen should be told that neither *khaddar* nor *charkha* nor prohibition will ever take us to the goal of *purna swaraj*. The determination to fight and conquer should replace the habit of hero-worship and the servile spirit of service.

¹ In his presidential address at the UP Political Conference held at Ayodhya on 30 December 1938, Jawaharlal Nehru announced: 'I think the Congress in the United Provinces has perhaps the greatest *sangathan*. Our membership runs to about fifteen lakhs. There may be some among us who may not be genuine Congressmen, but I feel that the number of such members would not be large and those enrolled are really the members of this organization. It has greatly pleased me to find such a large enrolment of members done here.'

² The Bihar Congress Socialist Party had decided to boycott the elections 'in view of the fact that vested interests and reactionary elements have been given prominence in the last election ... and considering further the dirty corruption that are being encouraged or tolerated in these elections resulting in loss of prestige to the Congress and the sad experiences

of the workings of local bodies that are now being run in the name of the Congress.' Members of the BCSP were directed not to contest the elections or take part in them. Resolution passed by the Second Bihar Congress Socialist Party under the presidency of Jayaprakash Narayan, *Independent India*, 1 January 1939.

2. Freedom: Article by Kamaladevi

Congress Socialist, 1 January 1939.

1 January 1939

Social legislation all the world over is changing its character and its influence more considerably. It is assuming bigger and far-reaching proportions. It is making deeper and sharper indents into the old social fabric. The reason is not far to seek. It is mainly because our economic framework is getting rudely shaken up, and these in turn have had their repercussion on our social living, greatly changing its surface.

India has not remained untouched by the impact of times. The old India is changing giving place to new. Tradition dies hard in a country whose social life is bedded deep into the very remote past. Social conceptions are hard and rigid, not easily moulded or shaped. But time with its ruthless blows has been battering away at our ancient structures. The West has come with its own modes and ideologies. Science has opened up new visions and newer worlds. The machine has with its colossal fangs eaten into the tired foundations of an old civilization.

The urge of the hour often conflicts with the prevailing usages, customs and laws. Failing a proper adjustment, there is pain and suffering. Life is made intelligently tolerable only when there is conviction in our hearts to support things. But when conviction yields place to blind faith or gross ignorance, or often what is even worse, a mere imposition of social tyranny, then it is time for the State to step in and take grip of the situation.

The world is in a terrible turmoil. The progressive democratic forces of freedom and liberty had been on the ascendancy, bring a large measure of relief to the oppressed and the exploited that had for many centuries been the under-dogs. But this quiet onward march has received all of a sudden a severe set back. The forces of reaction are let loose once again and the semi-emancipated are being forced back into the dark cellars and the cold gloomy pavements.

India is still at the cross roads and thanks to the virility and strength of her mighty national movement, her social conscience has become keenly alive and sensitive to the new elements which are rising all round.

The labouring class, rural and urban, and the women compose the socially dominated classes. The principle of vested interest in power position exploiting the weaker class is the same in both cases; they only differ in their exterior, not in the inner composition or the basic principle. Social legislation covers both and is successful in proportion to the strength of the demand and the power behind the rebels.

The women's movement is therefore by nature militant, like the labour or the peasants movement. There was a time when we took the privileges claimed by a small section of society, for granted, society merely bowed to this established custom. A slave was a slave, a master was a master never could the twain be equal, so also man was man. He could do anything. Life opened up vast unhampered vistas to him. He had merely to desire and it was his for the asking. Society never questioned, never censored. But alas! Woman was a mere woman, she was born to tend the kitchen, bear children and above all be the wife. Woman had no other ideal placed before her. From the hour of her birth to her last breath, she was taught and schooled only for one task, wifehood. She had no right or claim to anything. Why schooling and learning and knowledge? Why

any other equipment? Has not her life not only in this world but even in the next assured by her wife-hood?

Virtues have been her sole monopolies. While men played pranks and went galavanting with an easy conscience, woman had to tend the sacred hearth and keep the home fires pure.

But the ceaseless wheel of life keeps moving. Even the worm will turn and so the long oppressed wake up some day from their deep slumber of fear, superstition and tradition. They shake off their fears for a new hope is shaping in their hearts and soon it as a bright flame lighting their new path to a new destiny.

The many bills that are today before the Central and Provincial Legislatures are typical sign of the times. Our social views have changed our sense of social values transformed. New adjustment demands new laws.

Legal disabilities of women, which deprive them of many economic rights, claim a share. But they are limited in their sphere of operation though important as a principle of equality. But it is in the matrimonial field that the battle royal rages, for marital relations are the pivot round which all society revolves.

The existing laws, customs and usages militate against the interests of women. Men may marry when fancy seizes them. They can throw wives aside with the same easy contempt as we discard old clothes. No woman wants easy responsibilities or rather fanciful irresponsibilities. The foundations of a home and therefore of society can only be maintained by the two partners showing equal weight of responsibility and of a sense of appreciation of dual claims, rights and privileges. Society must crash when such a balance can't be maintained. It is therefore necessary that certain restraint should be applied where laxity has worked havoc or *vice versa*.

The two Bills which have attracted most attention perhaps are Mrs Subbarayan's to prevent polygamous marriage and Dr Deshmukh's Hindu Women's Right to Divorce. They both touch rather fundamental elements in Hindu society since unlike Child marriage Prevention Act or the Widows Remarriage Act, these Bills touch the established convention ruling the traditional or prevailing conception of marital relationship and that they should create violent reactions whether in favour of or against, is not surprising.

Divorce though still alien to Hindu Law as at present interpreted is not new to this country. I shall not digress and waste time in arguing whether the *Shastras* permit it or not. That seems quite beside the point. The stream of life flows on and its natural course cannot be indefinitely stopped though it may be temporarily arrested. Change is the very essence of life and if it is arrested by artificial measures, the result is clash and suffering.

When new forces are not properly regulated, then they break out and become unruly, ungovernable elements and lead to infinite chaos, pain and disruption. And therefore to merely turn down the new social measures with scorn, as bad and immoral, is stupidity. These new adjustments, in fact, are long overdue. Further delay will only mean more complications, greater human suffering.

The Baroda State has already given a lead in this matter by introducing from time to time appropriate social measures that help national progress.

Now let us examine these two bills which have caused such a sensation in our country and try to understand their significance. Dr Deshmukh's bill is a much shorter and simpler one, though the principle involved is very big—the right of divorce. Though this need has been felt more by the women than by the men (since men enjoy the right of contracting polygamous marriages) still I think I voice the opinion of all women when I say that if it is to be introduced at all, it should be as a social principle and not as a sex privilege. It is part of a human right which a human being claims in present day life. Therefore, it is a pity, it has been sought to be given only to the women, though in practice no doubt theirs is a greater need, and the volume of opinion against divorce is

because it sets the 'woman free'. Women have been bound by every conceivable convention, law and usage, so long that society does not kindly to the idea of emancipation for her.

This bill has, however, certain very big flaws that will stultify the bill and render it ineffectual. In the first place no provision is made to give divorce to those women, who are subjected to mental or physical cruelty. Secondly custody of the children is not guaranteed to the women. Unless this assurance is forthcoming practically no woman is likely to seek divorce. The child is the most precious thing to the woman and if there is the least risk of losing it, the woman will prefer to undergo any amount of suffering rather than lose it. Thirdly, there is no guarantee for maintenance. This will land most women literally on the streets and lead to un-told suffering and deterioration.

Therefore although this bill establishes a good principle, one is apprehensive of its practical value.

Mrs Subbarayan's bill on the other hand is far more comprehensive and really deals with two different aspects of married life. Divorce is the termination of a Union. It signifies a stage which is beyond prevention of a tragedy. There is no further hope of saving that marriage. It is a question of what can't be mended must be ended. But the polygamy bill seeks to minimize at least one type of disruption of a Union that is bringing into the home more than one wife which is often the beginning of its break up. At least this one tragedy can be prevented. That is why this aspect of the bill is so welcome. When the path to polygamy is closed, there are fewer chances of marriages going on the rocks. The aim is not to let married life get complicated and then find a solution by getting the knot itself disruption to their minimum. The aim of all reform is to increase human happiness by trying to remove or mitigate conflicts and clashes not to accentuate gaps and differences. The other aspect of the bill which provides for dissolution, though same in principle as in Dr Deshmukh's Bill, materially differs from it. In the first place polygamous marriages are to be prevented whether by men or women. Hence monogamy is established as a principle not as a protection for any one particular sex. To maintain this principle and keep it in tact, provision is made for the dissolution of the previous marriage where the absolute necessity for a subsequent marriage is felt. Therefore dissolution is not the aim. The real object behind Mrs Subbarayan's Bill is to preserve the sanctity of a marriage and only where it is violated and outraged and for good reasons, a second alliance becomes a reasonable need, relief is given. Otherwise it would mean tyranny and indescribable suffering. The causes for dissolution are also far more comprehensive and complete since they fully cover all the ground and fill in those obvious gaps which are so sad a feature of Dr Deshmukh's Bill. Moreover all the weak spots in the women's case are carefully safeguarded in Mrs Subbarayan's Bill. Her own personal property is to be made over to her by the husband as also provide for her maintenance. When husband seeks dissolution on the ground that the wife is suffering from an infectious and incurable disease, her maintenance must cover the costs of treatment for her, as a condition precedent to his obtaining dissolution. And above all provision has been made for the custody and maintenance of children, which is really the most crucial point.

It is therefore not at all surprising that the general opinion among women should be so largely in favour of Mrs Subbarayan's Bill. It will therefore be a great pity if people either interested in fighting this type of legislation or those who have simply not bothered to give thought to the two Bills, prevent the introduction of Mrs Subbarayan's Bill.



3. Bombay Provincial Congress Committee

S.K. Patil¹, General Secretary, F. No. G-53/1939, AICC Papers, 2 January 1939, NMML.

*Congress House
Vithalbhai Patel Road
Bombay 4*

Dear Friend,

We duly received your Circular No. 25, P-1/2562, dated the 14th December 1939, and in reply to the various points raised by you we would state as under:

1. The Number of Congress Committees in this City is eight: One Bombay PCC and seven District Committees, which are subordinate primary Committees.
2. The total number of office bearers is as under:

BPCC	...	5	
A Ward DCC	...	5	
B Ward DCC	...	6	
C Ward DCC	...	6	
D Ward DCC	...	6	
E Ward DCC	...	6	
F Ward DCC	...	7	
G Ward DCC	...	6	Total: 47

3. BPCC Details of source of income to BPCC will follow. As regards the amount of money received by DCCs, the main and the only source of income is membership, and it works out for the year roughly Rs 15,000. Income from other sources total to roughly Rs 850-0-0.
4. The amount of money spent by each District Congress Committee during the year and the main heads under which the expenditure was incurred is given below:

A Ward:	Establishment (office rent and salary)	Rs 361-0-0	
	Sundry expenses for general propaganda	Rs 100-0-3	
	15% quota to BPCC	Rs 193-0-0	
		<hr/> Rs 654-0-3 <hr/>	
B Ward:	Establishment (office rent and salary)	Rs 679-6-3	
	Printing & Stationery	Rs 95-12-0	
	General Propaganda	Rs 159-10-0	Since 1st Jan.
	General expenses	Rs 65-15-0	
	15% quota to BPCC	Rs 183-12-0	
		<hr/> Rs 1184-7-3 <hr/>	
C Ward:	Establishment (office rent and salary)	Rs 1453-0-0	
	Printing, Stationery & Postage	Rs 265-5-9	
	Swadeshi Propaganda	Rs 88-0-0	Since 1st Jan.
	General Propaganda	Rs 326-5-3	
	Misc. Expenses	Rs 122-11-6	
	15% quota to BPCC	Rs 343-6-6	
		<hr/> Rs 2599 <hr/>	

D Ward:	Establishment (office rent and salary)	Rs 736-4-0	
	Printing, Stationery & Postage	Rs 337-1-6	
	General Propaganda	Rs 414-7-7	Since Tripuri
	15% quota to BPCC	Rs 487-0-0	Session
		<hr/>	
		Rs 1975	
E Ward:	Figures not supplied by the Ward Concerned		
F Ward:	Establishment (office rent and salary)	Rs 666-0-0	Since 1st March
	Printing, Stationery & Postage	Rs 225-0-0	
	Misc. expenses, including purchase of furniture etc.		
		Rs 282-0-0	
	General Propaganda	Rs 442-0-0	
	13% quota to BPCC	Rs 353-0-0	
		<hr/>	
		Rs 1948-0-0	
G Ward:	Establishment (office rent and salary)	Rs 685-0-0	
	Printing & Stationery	Rs 270-0-0	
	General Propaganda	Rs 329-0-0	
	Misc. expenses	Rs 236-12-0	
	DCC Elections	Rs 169-8-0	Since Tripuri
	Hindi Classes expenses	Rs 183-8-0	Session
	15% Quota to BPCC	Rs 395-0-0	
		<hr/>	
		Rs 2268-12-0	

BPCC Will follow.

5. We have already given you in detail the arrangements that this Committee have with regard to the internal audit of the various Committees under our jurisdiction—vide our letter dated the 18th December 1939, in reply to your Circular letter No. 26, P/1/2587, dated 16-12-39.
6. There are seven Districts in the City (Province) of Bombay and their population, according to the 1931 Census is as follows:

A Ward (Fort)	...	64,027
B Ward (Mandvi)	...	111,365
C Ward (Bhuleshwar)	...	205,476
D Ward (Girgaum)	...	153,593
E Ward (Byculla)	...	273,050
F Ward (Parel)	...	159,514
G Ward (Dadar)	...	163,771
Total	...	<hr/> 1,133,796

7. We have no State attached to our Province.
8. The number of meetings of the various Congress Committees is as hereinunder:

BPCC Committee—22 meetings. (Since January 1939.)
 Executive—6 meetings. (Executive was appointed in September 1939.)
 A Ward: 7 Council Meetings

- B Ward: 13 Council Meetings (Since Tripuri Session.)
- C Ward: 23 Council Meetings (Since January
5 other meetings, including 2 primary members meetings)
- D Ward: 14 Council Meetings (Since Tripuri Session.)
- E Ward: Not supplied by the Ward Concerned.
- F Ward: 19 Council meetings.
- G Ward: 12 Council Meetings.

9. Public meetings and other demonstrations by BPCC and other subordinate bodies are as under:

- BPCC 26 Public Mass Meetings.
4 Processions.
6 Reception functions in honour of distinguished Congress leaders and other guests.
2 Cosmopolitan dinners.
17 Flag Hoisting Ceremonies (including monthly functions) (Since January 1939).
- A Ward: 11 Public Meetings.
2 Drama exhibitions demonstrating evils of drinking
- B Ward: 6 Public meetings.
5 Demonstrations.
9 Flag Hoisting Ceremonies.
- C Ward: 15 Public Meetings.
3 Processions.
4 *Prabhat Pheries*.
13 Flag Hoisting Ceremonies.
- D Ward: 4 Public Meetings, besides various *chowk* meetings during National and Gandhi Jayanti Weeks.
1 Hindi Elocution Competition.
1 Cycle Procession.
- E Ward: Not supplied by the Ward concerned.
- F Ward: 21 Public Meetings, including, 3 mass meetings.
3 Cycle processions, including one torch procession.
10 Flag Hoisting Ceremonies.
- G Ward: 18 Public Meetings.

10. As regards the constructive work done by the District Congress Committees, the activities of the Wards can be put under the following headings:

- Propagation of Swadeshi.
- Popularization of Khaddar by Khadi hawking, sale of Khadi hundies, conducting Spinning Classes & Weaving sacrificial spinning demonstrations.
- Prohibition campaign by actively cooperating with the Prohibition Propaganda Board appointed by the Congress Government was the additional feature of almost all the Wards during the period under report.
- Conducting Hindi Classes, and also Adult Literacy classes.
- Organizing Volunteer Organizations.
- Harijan contact, by holding priti bhojans, arranging Harijan Melas, special cinema shows for them etc.

As requested we shall send you as early as possible a brief report of our activities, but in the meanwhile, we trust that the information hereinabove supplied will be of some use to you.

Yours sincerely,
General Secretary

¹ Sadananda Kanhoji Patil (1900–81); educated at St Xavier's College, Bombay (1918–20) and the London School of Economics (1924–27), where he was influenced by the writings of Harold Laski; worked on the editorial staff of the *Bombay Chronicle* (1927–33); General Secretary of the Bombay PCC for seventeen years and its President in 1946; member of the Constituent Assembly and the Lok Sabha (1952–67); held various portfolios in the Central Cabinet and was member of the AICC since 1933.

4. Directives to the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee

Searchlight, 11 January 1939.

Obera
6 January 1939

The first session of the Obera Thana Yadava Conference was held on the 31st December 1938 and 1st January 1939 at Obera. Babu Ganpati Mandal of Bhagalpur was in chair.

A large number of people attended. Prominent among those, besides the president, and Babu Rampadarath Singh, chairman of the Reception Committee, were Dr Ramkrishna Yadava, Babu Ramnarain Singh, member of District Board, Babu Jageshwar Singh, Babu Ramcharitra Singh and Babu Shyam Bihari Prasad. The Conference passed several resolutions, important of which are the following:

(a) In view of the fact that the Congress Ministry is in power, there would be no difficulty in carrying through the Congress programme if only people holding the views of the Congress are returned to district boards. (At present) the Congress is making little progress in achieving its higher aims because of its participation in all sorts of elections, and because self-seekers enter the Congress fold and get themselves returned in elections. This conference (therefore) appeals to the Working Committee of the Provincial Congress Committee to remain neutral in the ensuing district board election and allow a Congress worker, who is not an MLA or MLC, or holds any high responsible office in the Congress, to stand for district board elections on his own merits.

(b) In case the Provincial Congress Committee does not accept this suggestion, the Congress appeals to the Committee to keep in mind the following facts at the time of selecting Congress candidates for the elections.

(1) As there is little representation of people belonging to the backward and exploited classes on the Provincial Assembly and it is simply dangerous to allow a particular class of people, specially the exploiting class, to be in power and the real welfare of the country lies in gradual transference of the reins of the government in the hands of the people in the real sense of the term, and as the district board is mainly concerned with primary education, hospitals, roads, wells, etc., which the backward and exploited classes greatly require, the Congress candidates should belong to the backward and exploited classes for the ensuring district board election.

(2) In case either of these suggestions are not accepted and the Congress Working Committee sets up candidates from the moneylenders, zamindars, the so-called high-class people and the capitalists to represent the interest of the people lying in debt, the Kisans, the backward classes, and labourers and does not give an opportunity to the backward and exploited classes to work in

the district board, such action of the aforesaid Committee would be opposed to the real interest of the Congress and the country. It is, therefore, resolved that under such circumstances the Yadavas would cooperate with other exploited and backward classes and oppose such candidates of the Congress with all possible efforts.

(3) Resolved that the provision of the Bihar Tenancy Act and the Moneylender's Act are not at all satisfactory. This conference appeals to the Bihar Government to frame laws to improve the condition of the tenants and debtors.

(4) Resolved that this conference has full sympathy with the working of Kisan Council in respect to reduction of rent and *Bakast* land and expresses its resentment against the attitude of the Government against the kisans in general and the kisan workers in particular.

5. On the Eve of Tripuri Congress: M.N. Roy's Statement

M.N. Roy Papers, UPCC Affairs-4, Subject File No. 7, 1938-40, NMML; also published in *Independent India*, 22 January 1939.

8 January 1939

A mild sensation has been created by the result of the election of delegates from the Dehradun urban constituency to the Tripuri Congress. I have been receiving anxious enquiries from all parts of the country. It is necessary to say a few words in order to answer them as well as to counteract the insidious propaganda done through tendentious and misleading reports appearing in the press. Significantly, those reports about an election in this remote corner of the province emanate from Lucknow, giving occasion to the suspicion that they are inspired by some interested party higher up. According to a report appearing in the *Hindustan Times* today, my opponent 'took up the challenge' of my 'criticism of the Gandhian school of thought and the achievements of the Ministry, and sought a vote of confidence for Gandhian politics'. It is asserted jubilantly that at least in this constituency the vote of confidence has been given. It is not mentioned that I lost by 28 votes only and that nearly half of the voters who went to the polls voted for me. The more significant fact is that they represented the intelligent educated and politically conscious Congressmen of the place. On the other hand, the nature of voters who supported my opponents is not a matter of pride, and the practices adopted for securing their votes are a talk of the town. However, that being an internal affair of the Congress should not be discussed publicly, but will be brought to the notice of the higher authorities with the demand for a new election.

I do not make a secret of the fact that I am opposed to 'Gandhian politics'. That fact is well-known. Nevertheless, I was offered uncontested election from many districts. Even now, I can secure unopposed seats if I choose to give in to pressure brought to bear upon me for that purpose. Therefore, whatever may be the merits or demerits of 'Gandhian politics' and its criticism by me, it is obviously premature to interpret the result of the Dehradun election as a vindication of one and repudiation of the other. On the contrary, the above facts show that my views are shared by a considerable section of Congressmen, although they are certainly disliked by others.

One word may be said here by way of explaining my 'defeat'. No political issue figured in the election campaign of my opponents. The point hammered was that I did not believe in God, and wanted to destroy religion. However, the philosophical views of a person may be very easily perverted by those who wish to make a political capital out of the prejudices of the ignorant masses. But the point is that an utterly irrelevant issue was introduced simply because my opponents could not fight me on political grounds.

Another allegation must be repudiated. I did not canvass support for my candidature. As a matter of fact, I was away until two days before the actual polling took place. It was not necessary for me to do any canvassing, because there was no doubt about my election if I chose to accept an uncontested seat. I preferred to contest the election because I wanted to demonstrate that a sufficiently large number of people in the Congress is beginning to think for themselves and cannot be misled by empty slogans and questionable practices. The Dehradun election has demonstrated that quite clearly.

I know that my absence from the PCC and the AICC will be deplored by a sufficiently large number of members of those bodies. But my absence will not be obligatory; if I stayed out, I would do so by choice as a protest against the system of malpractices which are destroying the internal democracy of the Congress. I shall continue my fight against that system and those practices, hoping to succeed sooner or later.

Finally, a word for those rapidly increasing Congressmen who have been pressing me for some time to be a candidate for the presidency of the PCC this year. An interesting side-light will be thrown on my 'defeat' if I mention here the fact that I received the request from Congressmen controlling the organization in this province. If, with that much popular support, one is to stay out of the Provincial Congress Committee, that is an eloquent commentary on the state of affairs which I have been criticizing and will continue to do so. If I still chose to stay out, that will be because I am in no hurry; the time is working for the radicals in the Congress.

6. The UP Political Conference

Independent India, Vol. 3, No. 2, 8 January 1939.

8 January 1939

The UP Political Conference held at Fyzabad on December 30th and 31st brought into relief once again the differentiation that is taking place in the Congress ranks in consequence of the acceptance of office. In this province, the Congress organization is politically more active than in any other provinces and is, consequently, more responsive to the mood of the masses. Therefore, the differentiation has developed to the extent of a crisis. Under the threat of resignation, the Executive Council of the PCC has succeeded in persuading the latter to be submissive. But the crisis has not been overcome thereby.

A similar situation was created once before when in July last, on the demand of the Ministry, the Executive Council requested the PCC to rescind its resolution, passed by an overwhelming majority, recommending that the Tenancy Bill be amended to reduce rents by 50 per cent. At that time, the PCC could be persuaded more easily to revoke its own verdict. The situation has been aggravated since then; the differentiation between the ministerialists and Congress workers acting under the pressure of the masses has become sharper. Therefore, this time the PCC had to be brow-beaten on the threat of resignation of its Executive Council. This is certainly not a normal situation. All serious Congressmen concerned with the future of the Congress as a mass organization are naturally perturbed. How to overcome the crisis? The events in the Political Conference have placed this all-important question before the entire Congress organization of the province.

The events developed as follows: the immense increase of membership had compelled active political workers in the districts to feel the necessity of finding suitable ways and means for consolidating the Congress organizationally. Bogus membership and corrupt practices during elections also had been causing them great concern. The PCC had directed district organizations to frame their constitutions so as to meet the new situation. Amendments to the constitution of the

PCC were also suggested. A model constitution for district organizations had been drafted by M.N. Roy and submitted for the consideration of the provincial executive on the one hand, and discussion by the district and lower committees, on the other. Many of the latter had found it suitable for the purpose of promoting the political education of the rank and file membership and strengthening the Congress organizationally. In its meeting in October last, the PCC set up a Sub-Committee for recommending constitutional amendments. The model Constitution for the district organizations, prepared by M.N. Roy, was also referred to the Sub-Committee for examination. But the scope of the Sub-Committee was limited because it was to recommend ways and means only for combating corrupt practices in elections.

The Sub-Committee made its report which was accepted by the Executive of the PCC and referred to the All-India Working Committee for approval. The recommendations being more or less similar to those made by the Working Committee for amending the All India Congress Constitution, the approval was given. Finally, they were submitted for the endorsement of the PCC when it met on the eve of the Provincial Conference. Evidently, the procedure was faulty. Both the Executives, the Provincials as well as the All India, went beyond their jurisdiction. The recommendations should have been first submitted to the PCC concerned before they could be referred by the Provincial Executive to the higher Executive, or the latter could take cognizance of them. The faulty procedure confronted the PCC with an accomplished fact. As a matter of the fact, during the discussion of the recommendations in the PCC, efforts were made to maintain that its objections were not valid in so far as they went against the decision of the All India Working Committee. This effort to destroy the internal democracy of the Congress is to be noticed everywhere. It lied at the root of the crisis which, if not satisfactorily solved, may prove disastrous for the Congress as a whole.

Mainly of a technical and superficial nature, the recommendations of the Constitution Sub-Committee of the PCC included a number of highly objectionable items. However, the conflict made itself evident only on one particular point. One of the recommendations was that Congress members of Municipalities and District Boards should be members of the Executive of local Congress Committees. That was a very welcome recommendation. If acted upon, it would go a long way towards putting an end to indecent disputes and factional squabbles which are the outstanding features of local Congress organizations and are practically ruining them. Yet, a certain section of the PCC opposed precisely that one good recommendation. Fortunately, Municipal politicians did not command a majority in the PCC. Their amendment demanding the deletion of the clause was thrown out. The second amendment, moved from the opposite section of the PCC, was to improve the recommendation. It demanded that members of the Legislative Assembly and council should also be debarred from the Executive of Congress Committees. The amendment was carried by an overwhelming majority in the teeth of vigorous opposition from the side of Executive Council. By convention, the Executive acts collectively. Therefore, it was difficult to say if its opposition to the majority view of the PCC was unanimous. But there is ground to believe that it was not. However, the convention seems to have compelled the dissenting members to keep quiet.

Having considered the situation, the Executive Council of the PCC came to the conclusion that the amendment to the report of the Constitution Sub-Committee meant a revision of the policy of entering the Legislatures and accepting office. Obviously the conclusion was rather far-fetched. However, it was on that ground that the Executive threatened to resign unless the PCC revised its resolution. The case of the Executive was that it could not shoulder the responsibility of changing a policy adopted by the All India Congress and executed by the Working Committee. It was maintained that, in the situation created by the passing of the amendment, MLA's on the

Provincial Executive should immediately resign, and they constitute nearly half of the body. The argument, obviously, was irrelevant. The recommendations of the Constitution Sub-Committee, as amended by the PCC could not be immediately acted upon. They had to be referred to the All India Executive, particularly when they required any change of general policy. Therefore, immediate resignation of any members of the Legislative Assembly was not an issue. Nor was the Provincial Executive required to shoulder any responsibility for revising a policy introduced by the All India Congress. All it had to do was to respect the verdict of the Provincial Committee and bring it to the notice of the All India Executive. Why, instead of adopting that normal democratic procedure, the Executive of the PCC precipitated a crisis by threatening to resign is an interesting question?

The answer to the question could not be found in what actually happened in the meeting of the PCC. The events there took place on the background of a situation developing throughout the province. The outstanding fact of the situation is that practically in every district the Congress organization is split up into two groups which are working in such different directions that they can be characterized as two Congresses. In each district, the small number of Congressmen elected to the local bodies and the Legislature have constituted themselves into a group which claims to be completely independent of the properly constituted local Congress Committees, and practically asserts that anti-democratic claim by virtue of its direct access to the Provincial Executive as well as the Ministry. This situation naturally creates growing resentment on the part of those who are responsible for all the activities of the Congress in the given district. Consequently, in many places members of the former group have been eliminated from the offices of the local Congress organizations. Yet, by virtue of some of them being old Congressmen and others, though new, having different sorts of advantages, still retain places on the Executives of Congress Committees. Usually, in a minority in those Committees, they nevertheless manage to dominate them by virtue of the fact that their voice carried greater weight in higher quarters.

The situation has been more aggravated and the relation between the two groups of Congressmen greatly embittered by the tendency of the ministerialist group to be associated more and more closely with local officialdom. On the other hand, district and lower Congress Committees are today largely composed of the so-called 'common people', mostly hailing from the villages, being either peasants themselves or very closely connected with the rural toiling masses. In other words the lower units of the Congress are, in the process, counter-balanced by the questionable activities and highly reprehensible tendencies of the ministerialist group which, in the districts, is largely composed of Congressmen on the local bodies, municipalities, district boards, etc. The result is a horizontal differentiation between the established leadership and the active political workers in the districts representing the bulk of the membership. This new differentiation is obliterating the old party groupings. Taking a long view of things, one should welcome this process.

That is the background of the crisis which characterized the PCC meeting on the eve of the Provincial Political Conference. In the last analysis, the crisis has been brought about by a maturing conflict between ministerialism and the urge to push ahead towards the goal of complete independence. The dissatisfaction with the functioning of the Congress Ministry in this province is greater than in other provinces because of the greater political activity of the Congress organization here. District, circle and even village Congress Committees are functioning organizations. Consequently, they cannot help reflecting the mood of the masses. With all their political backwardness and blind faith in idolized leaders, the masses are shocked by the spectacle of prominent Congressmen hobnobbing with officials who, until the other day, were busy in fighting the Congress and even today have not changed very much in their relation to the common folk. The fact of the situation is that there is a tendency to transform local Congress organizations into adjuncts of the machinery of the established administrative system. There is a growing revolt

against this tendency. The crisis in the PCC was a faint echo of that revolt. As long as that revolt is there the crisis cannot be overcome. On the other hand, the ultimate solution of the crisis depends on the development of that revolt.

It is expected that the result of this year's election to the PCC will indicate a farther sharpening of the differentiation. It still remains to be seen whether that will go to the extent of fully democratizing the internal life of the provincial Congress organization. Doubt on that score is increased by certain other recommendations of the Constitution Sub-Committee which have been endorsed by the PCC. They will place obstacles in the way of the 'common people' getting elected to the PCC and even to the DCC's. And they are going to be acted upon already in this year's elections. Two of them may be mentioned.

According to one, the qualification for contesting election to the District Congress Committees will be acquitted by the payment of at least one rupee per year in addition to the usual case of election to the PCC. It should be remembered that until now only election did not qualify one to be a delegate to the Annual Session of the Congress. A delegate fee of eight rupees had to be paid. That obligation kept the majority of active political workers out of the PCC. Moreover, many members of the PCC had to do the bidding of those who made the payment for them. Now the obligation is increased by another three rupees. It is common experience of all active workers that the villagers who constitute the great bulk of the Congress membership are not in a position to pay even four annas a year. In view of this experience, it is evidently unjust and undemocratic to impose the new qualification for candidates for election to the PCC and DCC's. It will be a decisive check upon the great majority of the membership reaching the Provincial Committee or even the District Committees. The stipulation will defeat the purpose of combating corruption. Because poor political workers will have to depend on the help of others to come to the Committees. And such help usually has a string attached to it.

The other stipulation is curious as well as harmful. During election, candidates are debarred from issuing any written or printed circulars and criticizing other candidates. Freedom of speech is tabooed. It is difficult to see how the election will be fought. Prohibiting public discussion of conflicting ideas and ideals will reduce the whole affair to underhand propaganda and backdoor methods. That again will promote factional squabbles and corruption.

The revolt against ministerialism being the dominating spirit of the PCC, it failed to oppose these stipulations which will retard the process of the democratization of the Congress machinery. But the whole thing is still in the melting pot. The outstanding feature is the new line of differentiation, which, though blurred by the pomp and ceremonies of the following two days of the open conference, still remains, holding out to the critical observer the hopes for a more reassuring future.

7. Muslims and the Congress

Hindu, 10 January 1939.

9 January 1939

An appeal to Muslims to believe in their own strength and not trust those who preached hatred was made by Mr A. Rahim Ahmad, President of the Muslim Welfare League. He said that it was a shame that nine crores of Muslims should think that they were a minority, while an insignificant number of foreigners were ruling the whole country. This was the false psychology that Jinnah was dinning into their ears... the Congress stood for freedom and freedom certainly could not be denied to them (Muslims). He appealed to the members of his community to believe in their own strength and not trust those who preached hatred.

Referring to the backward condition of Muslims, the speaker said that they must organize and help themselves, and referred to the case of Brahmins who constituted only 3 per cent of the population in this presidency but were in the vanguard of all movements. He deplored the fight between Hindus and Muslims, who were brothers after all and characterized the Aga Khan¹ as the 'sole agent' of British Imperialism and Mr Jinnah as the 'sub-agent'. The speaker referred to the constructive work carried on by the Congress, the members of which were so perfectly disciplined.

¹ Aga Khan (1875–1958); assumed spiritual headship of the Ismailis in August 1885; member of the Imperial legislative council, 1902–04; led the Simla Deputation to Minto, 1906; president, All India Muslim League, 1907–12; resigned because he found it impossible to lead the Muslims, for 'my advise will be loyalty of the kind that means trust and confidence and that trust and confidence the Muslims are not now giving to government'; president of the All Parties Muslim Conference at Delhi, December 1928; chairman of the British Indian delegation to the Round Table Conference 1930, 1931; led the Indian delegation to the League of Nations, 1932, 1934–47; President of the League of Nations, 1937.

8. On 'Gandhism' and the Congress Programme

'Conflict of Ideas and Confusion of Ideals', *Independent India*, 15 January 1939.

15 January 1939

'Gandhi is not the Congress'—'Gandhism is not Nationalism', thus ended a manifesto issued by some radical Congressmen at the time of the Lucknow Congress in 1936. At that time, it was generally expected that the Congress was going to strike out a new way of struggle. Gandhian politics had ended in bankruptcy. Civil disobedience having failed, twice within three years, Gandhiji himself had ordered its suspension indefinitely. In his presidential address to the Lucknow Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru placed before the Indian masses the ideal of socialism, and what was more important, he asked the Congress to march towards the goal of self-determination with the demand of Constituent Assembly. Since then, the idea of socialism has inspired an increasingly large number of young radicals in the Congress; the demand for Constituent Assembly has also been repeated by the Congress time and again. Yet, before long, Gandhism recovered from the crisis and regained its hold on the Congress. So much so, that today Gandhism is not only identified with Nationalism, but as a matter of fact placed above Nationalism. There could be no objection to this confusion of ideals, if Gandhism represented an ideal higher and nobler than nationalism. For the moment, we are concerned with Gandhian politics; the philosophy of Gandhism is not the immediate issue.

We have often pointed out the contradiction between the political programme of the Congress, and what has come to be known as its creed. Gandhism is the creed of the Congress. The political programme of the Congress is being revised, so that it may be compatible with the creed. The fundamental principle of Gandhism is non-violence. Practiced according to this principle, Congress politics can hardly be distinguished from constitutionalism. Whatever may be the philosophical excellence or moral value of the doctrine of non-violence, its practice in a political struggle means abstention from doing anything that might disturb the established order. Gandhism also proposed to change the existing state of affairs. But it believes that the change should begin in the heart of those who are responsible for the existing conditions and derive benefit there from. Abstractly, this may be a very plausible method. But there is nothing new in it. Ultimately, it is an appeal. Is an emotional appeal likely to be more effective than an intellectual appeal? An intelligent answer to this question will help us to solve the conflict of ideas about the realization of the political programme of the Congress, and clear the confusion about its ideal.

If we are to have any regard for truth, we must plead guilty to the charge that, since the acceptance of office, Congress politics do not differ in any way from the politics of the Liberals,

that is constitutionalism. All the Congress Ministers being avowed Gandhists, the present Congress politics is Gandhist politics. Ministerialism is the political expression of Gandhism. While still professing that complete independence is the condition for the national welfare of the Indian people, it is today maintained practically all the Congress leaders that the welfare of the Indian masses can be promoted under the established political relations. Efficient administration of the Imperialist State has come to be regarded as the most effective and desirable method of national reconstruction. Here is the clearest contradiction between Gandhism and nationalism. Gandhist politics proposes to reach the goal of national liberation by simply ignoring the chain of political slavery. It disowns the right of revolt and preaches the cult of suffering and sacrifice, the practice of which virtues would intimately melt the heart of the slave-holder.

Nationalism certainly has a broader connotation. But the attainment of its cultural ideals is conditional upon its political success. A nation must be politically free before it can prosper economically and progress culturally. The immediate objective of a nationalist movement, therefore, is the attainment of political freedom. Gandhism is preventing the Congress from leading the Indian people towards the goal. Recent history and the present practice of the Congress bear out this contention. Ruling out revolutionary struggle by the insistence on the dogmatic doctrine of non-violence, it left no other alternative for the Congress than to travel the blind-alley of reformism, when the limited possibilities of the tactics of non-cooperation and civil disobedience were exhausted. Revolutionary struggle is indispensable for any political movement. For a subject people, nationalism is a revolutionary ideal. It is incompatible with constitutionalism. In the last analysis, Gandhi's politics is constitutionalism. Therefore, Gandhism cannot be reconciled with nationalism.

While political independence is the immediate objective of Indian nationalism, for Gandhism it is of no greater importance than the prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs, removal of untouchability, promotion of hand-spinning and weaving and the practice of non-violence in thought, words and deeds. Whatever may be the intrinsic merit of those propositions of Gandhism, it is very difficult to see how they can be given any place in the program of the struggle for freedom. Yet, Congress politics are today concerned entirely with those dogmas and utopias of Gandhism. It is maintained that complete independence will automatically follow from their realization. If we believe that complete independence will be attained only when non-violence will be practiced by every Indian in thought, words and deeds, we may just as well as prepared to do without it for an immeasurable time to come. In support of this practical liquidation of the struggle for political freedom, it is maintained that non-violent methods has already enabled the Congress to come well within the reach of its goal. Of course, it all depends on how the goal is interpreted. All Congressmen may not be prepared to admit that Indian masses would not have come nearer to the goal of political independence, if they were allowed to adopt other methods of struggle than those sanctioned by Gandhism. However that may be, it is simply self-deception, wishful thinking, or even worse, to say that, under the leadership of the Congress, India stands today nearer to national freedom than ever previously. As a matter of fact, Congress politics of late has been practically disowning that goal. If once upon a time the Congress stood for complete independence and even went to the extent of visualizing, though vaguely, the perspective of a revolutionary struggle indispensable for the capture of political power, today it stands for something entirely different. This may not be clear to the average Congressman who is usually a trusting soul. Those guiding its politics may not admit it. But the implication of Congress politics today is sufficiently clear for the critical observer.

Congressmen are conscientiously carrying on the administration of a number of provinces with the confidence that, even under the established political system they will be able to promote the welfare of the Indian people. They and their supporters no longer believe that the welfare of

the Indian people is incompatible with imperialist domination. The new Constitution, fiercely combated until recently as the charter of slavery of the Indian people, is today accepted as having established democratic regimes in the provinces and granted so much political power to the elected representatives of the people, as enables them to realize the programme of the Congress without any further struggle. Of course, we are still asked to prepare for some sort of a struggle that may take place in some indefinite future. But we hear more about legislative reforms and plans of economic reconstruction which presuppose that Congressmen will continue in office for years to come. While the Congress resolution to resist the imposition of the Federal scheme still stands formally, Gandhiji confidently expects that, before long, Congressmen will be required to shoulder the responsibility of administering the government also in the Centre. Other responsible Congress leaders have also talked of our reaching Delhi before long in the race for freedom. So, the occupation by Congressmen of the high offices in the Imperial Capital of Delhi can be somehow fitted into the scheme of Congress politics today. Can that still be called nationalist politics?

The practical repudiation of the political objectives of nationalism has taken place, and is justified by those responsible for it, because of the identification of complete independence with the dogmas and utopias of Gandhism which have nothing to do with nationalism. Congress Ministries have been introducing prohibition; they are subsidizing the production of *khaddar* and planning the promotion of other primitive industries; rural development is receiving much of their attention; a scheme of education inspired by Gandhism may soon be put into practice; efforts are made to prevent industrial disputes by legislative and executive measures; the tricolour flag with the emblem of *charkha* shares honour with the Union Jack even flies alone over less important places of public administration; and finally, the ministers report a remarkable change of heart of the part of the representatives of the British Crown. Nearly all the postulates of Gandhism are on the way to fulfillment. The present Constitution does not restrict ministerial activities in all directions. Whether even those ends could be reached, may be a pertinent question. But efforts in those directions are not prohibited. That being the case, from the point of view of Gandhism, the way to swaraj is open before us. The Congressmen in office have the power to help the fulfillment of the famous 'constructive programme' and once that is done, Swaraj will automatically follow. That is the faith of Gandhism. Given that faith, Congress Ministries today in the provinces and eventually one in the Centre (even a coalition would do) serve the political purpose of Gandhism. Indeed, the fundamental postulate regarding the practice of non-violence is not fulfilled. But even on that score, Congressmen in office can do a great deal by enforcing imperialist law and order for creating an atmosphere of non-violence.

That being the case, the Gandhist leadership of the Congress wishes to make the entire organization subservient to the convenience of the ministries. The struggle for national liberation must be liquidated. Gandhism has brought the Congress to this point, where it must betray its own professions unless, inspired by revolutionary ideas, it can clarify its ideals. With the doctrine of non-violence as its cardinal dogma, Gandhism cannot permit any revolutionary struggle with the purpose of overthrowing the established order. Therefore, it cannot be reconciled with the consummation of the nationalist aspirations of the Indian people. A foreign power stands on the way. It must be removed, and there should be no scruple regarding the means to be employed for that purpose. But it is not necessary to confuse the contradiction between Gandhism and nationalism by raising the remote issue of violence versus non-violence. We do not advocate violent means. But we insist upon the argument that Congress politics is bound to degenerate into futile constitutionalism if it is made subservient to the cult of non-violence.

The object of nationalist politics is the establishment of a democratic State according to the principle of sovereignty of the people. It is an illusion to expect that the present political system

will eventually transform itself into a really democratic State. It is an illusion because it disregards the realities of imperialist exploitation, and flies in the face of the experience of history. Imperialism itself does not make any secret of its intentions. If it can have its way, India will never be really free. Therefore, the issue is clear before the nationalists who are neither confused by irrelevant considerations, nor motivated by some ideology antagonistic to the progressive purposes of nationalism. The belief in an eventual change of heart on the part of Imperialism is constitutionalism in an emotional garb. It represents the readiness to come to terms with Imperialism. Gandhism is driving the Congress towards that shameful position. Therefore, it must be repudiated by those for whom Nationalism is a progressive ideal to be attained only through a revolutionary struggle. The Congress is a nationalist organization created by the awakening of the Indian masses. It must become conscious of its revolutionary purpose. Instead of that, it has become an instrument for the practice of Gandhism which disowns the revolutionary purpose of Nationalism. Therefore, on the eve of the annual session of the Congress, it is useful to remind its rank and file that Gandhism is not nationalist and Gandhi is not the Congress.

It remains to be seen whether this truism will influence the Tripuri Congress any more decisively than it did the Lucknow Congress. There is no reason for optimism. At that time, Gandhism was in a crisis. It had just suffered a discrediting defeat. If even then the Congress could not outgrow it, there is little chance of its doing so today when it represents nothing more than triumphant Gandhism. But India need not be deluded by this triumph. Because the triumph of Gandhism means defeat of Nationalism. If the Congress fails to cast off the fatal spell, it will have to make room for a more consciously revolutionary political organization to lead the Indian masses in the struggle for national freedom.

9. Election to the Tripuri Congress

‘Appeal to Congress Members’, *Independent India*, 15 January 1939. This is a statement of policy issued by V.B. Karnik, M.R. Shetty, Madan Shetty, Tajuddin Ajmeri and Maniben Kara, in support of their candidature as delegates to the Tripuri Congress to be elected by the Congress members in the City of Bombay.

15 January 1939

We are offering ourselves as candidates for election as delegates to the Tripuri Session of the Indian National Congress. In requesting the Congress members of the respective wards to vote for us and elect us as delegates and as members of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, we desire to invite their attention to new considerations which should guide them in their choice.

Election of delegates is the most important event in the internal life of the Congress. The elected delegates determine the policy of the Congress which during the year is binding on the entire membership. It is the only occasion when the rank and file members of the Congress get an opportunity to express their views on the affairs of the Congress and to set the matters right by electing the proper type of men to represent them in the higher Congress organizations. The election should therefore be fought on clear political issues. Political problems facing the Congress and the ways and means of tackling them should be clearly placed before the members and they should be asked to give their verdict on them. Unfortunately, it does not happen so. We propose to contest this election on the basis of a political programme and appeal to the members to give their votes to us only because the political programme advocated by us is best calculated to help the Congress in advancing towards its goal.

The immediate problem before the Congress is how to combat the (idea of) Federation. The Congress has declared its opposition to Federation and its determination to wreck it. But no concrete

plan of action has been yet chalked out to attain the objective. Unless such a plan is chalked out, it will be impossible for the Congress to translate into action its anti-Federation resolutions. The plan that we suggest is to blast the provincial foundations of Federation. We suggest the wrecking of the provincial apparatus of the constitution as a condition for the wrecking of its central party. Constitutional deadlocks in the provinces must be brought about on issues of vital interests to the masses and must be preceded by the utmost endeavour on the part of the Congress Ministries to implement the terms of the Congress election manifesto. We urge that the programme of ministerial activity be planned out with this objective and on these lines, and that offices be utilized for preparing the country for the imminent struggle ahead.

Struggle against Federation is part of our struggle for national independence. National independence cannot be attained nor can Federation be wrecked without mass action. To attain that objective it is necessary to mobilize the largest possible masses of our people in a decisive struggle against imperialism. That can be done only by initiating and developing the struggle of the masses for the redress of their immediate economic and political demands. The Congress must, therefore, follow a more active policy of identifying itself with the struggles of the peasants against the landlords and moneylenders, of workers against their employers, of the poor people against oppression and exploitation. The policy of hobnobbing with vested interests, of understandings and compromises with landlords and capitalists, of posing as the protector of all interests must immediately cease. The Congress cannot at one and the same time protect the interests of the peasants and the landlords, of the workers and the capitalists. It must come out as the bold champion of the interests of the capitalists and the landlords. Then alone will it be able to mobilize under its banner and overwhelming majority of our people for the destruction of the imperialist rule. The present policy of acting as the guardian of all interests is alienating the masses from the Congress (and) thus weakening its fighting capacity. The Congress is and must remain an organization of the teeming millions of India and must progressively become a more and more valiant defender of their interests.

The struggle of the States' people is an integral part of our national struggle for independence and a logical corollary of our immediate struggle against Federation. During the last year there has been a phenomenal growth of the movement of the State's people for responsible government and against feudal oppressions. Owing to the false policy of non-intervention adopted by the Congress under the direction of Gandhi, these movements were denied the support and leadership of the Congress, leading to their weakening and, in a number of cases, suppression by the native rulers. The policy of non-intervention, the attitude of regarding the princes as friends, is very harmful to our national movement. They must be abandoned and a policy of active help to the struggles of the state's people must be immediately adopted. We pledge ourselves to strive in that direction.

The time has now come when the Congress must undergo a radical transformation in its struggle and organization. As a mere mass movement the Congress will be no longer able to tackle successfully the political tasks facing it. The time has now come when the Congress must transform itself into a revolutionary people's party. The millions rallied under its banner must be trained and organized to act as disciplined soldiers in the struggle for freedom. As a loose mass organization, the Congress will not be able to perform successfully the decisive task of overthrowing imperialism and establishing on its ruins a democratic government of the people. It is necessary now to organize the Congress as disciplined centralized revolutionary party of the Indian people. As the people's Party it must be a democratic organization taking its initiative from below and providing the widest possible scope for the expression and assertion of the will of its membership. As the framework of the future free democratic state of the Indian people, it must consist of a

countrywide network of democratically functioning and centrally coordinated local committees acting as the organs of struggle of the local masses....

A complete overhauling of the Congress constitution in the light of these considerations is the immediate task. If we are elected we shall address ourselves to that task in co-operation with others of our line of thinking.

These political and organizational tasks follow from the oft-repeated resolutions and the dictated aims and objects of the Congress. Ordinarily, there should be no dispute about them as all Congressmen should be equally interested in the carrying through of the Congress resolutions. But that is not the case today. There is a small but a strong section within the Congress, and one unfortunately occupying all the leading post positions therein, which is not interested in the execution of the Congress resolutions as the same would run counter to their cherished policies and pet dogmas. The Congress has vowed undying opposition to Federation but there is an attempt to arrive at an understanding with imperialism on the basis of a few changes in the Federal Scheme. The Congress decided to accept offices in order to wreck the Constitution; but the Congress Ministries acting under the orders of the High Command are actually working it. The Congress election manifesto and numerous resolutions of the Congress promised various ameliorative measures for the benefit of the masses; but as a matter of fact on most material points relief is being altogether denied and, in a few cases, where it is being granted in such agonizingly small quantities that instead of satisfying it exasperates the people. Extension of civil liberties was promised, but after a slight initial expansion they are being progressively narrowed. An intensification of the struggle against imperialism was visualized. But the dominant tendency is to postpone it, to soften it, to make the people forget it by shouting from the house tops about the glorious achievements of Congress Ministries. This backsliding, this going back upon the Congress resolutions, this departure from the fundamental policies and programme of the Congress, must be halted. If it is not stopped the Congress will lose its mass following, its power and prestige based upon it and will cease to be the revolutionary organ of the Indian people.

There is a growing dissatisfaction within the Congress with these reformist capitulatory tendencies of its leadership. A revolt is growing within the Congress rank against these tendencies for the preservation of the glorious traditions of the Congress and its role as the leader of the people's revolt against imperialism. The dominant leadership is endeavouring to suppress this revolt by resorting to various questionable tactics. A smoke-screen of irrelevant talk about truth and non-violence is being raised to hide the real purpose of purging the Congress of its most revolutionary, but to it undesirable elements. The attempt to enforce the spinning franchise and other measures are moving in that direction. It shall be our task to fight against these tendencies and to strengthen the left forces within the Congress in order that it may continue and develop as the fighting organization of the Indian people.

Concretely, therefore, if we are elected as delegates we shall endeavour in the Tripuri Congress, in the BPCC and in all other Congress organizations.

- (1) to chalk out a concrete plan of action for combating Federation.
- (2) to effect a reorientation of the Ministerial policy in the direction of the speedier implementing of the election manifesto.
- (3) to develop a closer and more livelier contact between the Congress and the struggles of the masses.
- (4) to reverse the policy of non-intervention in States, to be substituted by a policy of active support to the struggles of the state's peoples.
- (5) to transform the Congress into a revolutionary peoples' party with suitable changes in the organization and structure of the Congress.

- (6) to resist neo-constitutionalist tendencies of the present leadership and
- (7) to prepare the Congress for a decisive struggle against imperialism for the capture of political power.

We have been loyal members and ardent workers of the Congress for a number of years. We have all along striven for the development and the strengthening of the Congress as the organ of the people's revolt against imperialism. We have been also associated with the working class and other like movements and have always worked for the unification of all these movements under the Congress banner for the accomplishment of the tasks of national democratic revolution. If the Congress members of our respective wards are so good as to repose their confidence in us and to elect us as delegates we shall strive with all the resources at our command for the acceptance of these policies by the Congress. We appeal to them to cast their votes in our favour as an indication of their desire and determination to develop the Congress movement on the lines indicated above.

10. Keeping Step With Times

Article by Kamaladevi, *Congress Socialist*, 15 January 1939.

15 January 1939

The Delhi Session of the All India Women's Conference marks a new epoch in the history of this Conference, which began in vague and obscure way as an Educational Conference, then quickly expanded into a social one as well and has now broken all its former bounds and decided to take up all questions affecting the nation, but particularly those which have a bearing upon the women and children. This was inevitable in the natural evolution of such an organization, for the problems of women and children are but the human problems which are inextricably part of the national problems of the country. Therefore no organization which is genuinely on the quest to solve questions of vital importance can chop them up as male and female and treat them as separate, isolated entities.

The All India Women's Conference has at last arrived at this, perhaps through a long-winded fortuitous pathway. For although the argument is often advanced that it is only 11 years old, it hardly carries any weight or significance. For an organization is judged not by its longevity but by its capacity to respond to the larger and the more fundamental needs of a country, its sensitiveness to reflect the mood and spirit of the time and its genius to adjust itself to a changing world. Therefore it may leap over decades and centuries overnight as India and Indian womanhood did in 1930.

One almost expected that this premier body of women in this country would keep step with the leaping feet. But it proved rather slow, and disposed to take its own time. But the end was as inevitable as dawn at the end of night. And to-day after much tussle though not storm, the women have with their unfailing wisdom, commonsense and tact realized their duty and declared their sense of freedom and responsibility in this hour of the country's need.

The Conference has been fortunate enough to have a president this year, who with a clear sense of reality has declared that the Conference had to stand for complete Independence for India. To an ordinary observer this may seem a very ordinary thing, with nothing of import. But do not let us forget that it is an organization which has still a definite weightage of the official section and it was not so very long ago that none of its sessions ever opened except by the dainty hands of the vicereine, or the Governor's wife and none dared to sit on its presidential chair except a resplendent bejeweled ruling Rani.

But today from its forum it is declaring its adherence to complete independence; one of its bye laws makes it impossible for those who don't strictly observe 'Swadeshi' in their daily life to hold any office or serve on any executive in the Conference.

It has condemned imperialism, the competition for spheres of influence, economic exploitation and the lust to possess colonies as the root causes of war and it has appealed to the women of the world, especially those in imperialist countries to join hands with those who are fighting for the freedom of every nation and country for then alone can real peace be established.

The Conference has also refused to participate or cooperate with any war activity or scheme designed to help in war. It has moreover declared that India should have nothing to do with any war and strictly adhere to the principle of non-violence. It has also condemned the Anti-Recruitment Bill recently passed, as a gross violation of the elementary right of a nation to follow its own philosophy, technique and attitude towards war. In conclusion it expresses its sympathy with those who are sad victims of imperialist and fascist aggression such as Palestine, Spain, China etc.

The Conference as all other women's organizations has all along most creditably and courageously set their faces against Communalism. In a world torn by eternal internal conflicts, the women had stood refreshingly and singularly, as one indivisible solid unit that nothing could split or shake. They firmly set their face against Communal electorates, reservation of seats on Communal basis, the Communal award etc. and now in a very realistic strain they elaborate that Communalism is merely the creation of a small class which wishes to exploit the major people for its own selfish ends and that as the economic and social grievances of the mass of all Communities and creeds are common, they are not affected by this position and stand united in their day to day economic struggle and that it is by our close contact with the masses and bringing this fact more firmly home to them that Communalism can be destroyed.

In defining its labour policy it has undoubtedly taken a big leap and given a fine lead to many an organization when it says that labour should cease to be an item of expense in the producing industry and come to be regarded as partner instead. It has not needed much ideology or acrimonious dissertations on various economic theories for them to stumble on this. It is just their sense of fairness justice, humanitarian vision, attempted to be translated into their daily life, their field of work and activity. The Conference has yet a long way to go before it is able to clarify issues and get down to their fundamentals more scientifically and analytically. But a very good beginning has undoubtedly been made and the Conference seems fairly well going in the right direction.

It needs two very vital changes yet. One is the change in its composition so that it represents much more the average Indian woman. The other is its implication and directness in taking up subjects or activities. It is too much cluttered up with a whole forest of items that give it an air of unreality and make its decisions irresponsible. The Conference would gain enormously in strength as well as in prestige if it took up fewer questions and concentrated more on them. But for that we need to get down more to fundamentals, for that considerably simplifies the problem, for where we saw an impossible forest, we see but a single root which if properly dealt with clears the entire ground.

11. Congress Presidentship

Editorial, *Tribune*, 22 January 1939.

21 January 1939

Reports emanating from Wardha and Allahabad indicated that the Congress High Command was in favour of the election of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as President of the Tripuri Congress. But it

seems it has not succeeded in persuading the Maulana to accept the onerous duties of President. This is apparent from the fact that Maulana Azad has now publicly announced his withdrawal from the contest. In a statement to the Press, the Maulana says: 'Due to my constant pre-occupation during the past two years with the work of the Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee my health has suffered great deterioration. I, therefore, feel that I am unable to endure the additional strain of the work and responsibility of the Congress presidentship.' He, however, commends the name of Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya for the Congress Presidentship. Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya is no doubt an old member of the Congress Committee. He has been serving the Congress and the country in a selfless manner. But while considering the question of Congress Presidentship, we cannot ignore the claims of Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, who has discharged and is discharging the duties of his exalted office with conspicuous abilities. He is a link between the rightists and leftists in the Congress. He is one of the two idols of the youth of India. His re-election to the office of President will certainly give great satisfaction even to those who are not satisfied with the manner in which the Congress High Command is functioning. The need of the hour is that there should be complete solidarity in the ranks of the Congress. Who can better bring about this solidarity than Mr Bose who enjoys the full confidence of all sections of Congressmen? Not only that. The re-election of Mr Bose will mean the continuity of the policy that the Congress has been following during his tenure of office. The British Government is thinking of foisting the federal scheme on India. If it does so, the Congress may have to wage a strenuous and determined struggle against it. Who is better fitted to lead this struggle than Mr Bose?¹ From whatever point of view we may look at the matter, there is no doubt that we cannot have a better person to guide the ship of the Congress during the next year, than Mr Subhas Chandra Bose....

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru observed in his statement of 26 January: 'I told Subhas Babu so. I was equally clear in my mind that the obvious person for the presidentship was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Every line of reasoning led me to this conclusion. He was peculiarly fitted to deal with some of our vital problems. He had that delicate insight and sensitiveness which understood and appreciated viewpoints other than his own. He is an elder statesman of the Congress, respected and trusted by all and most fitted to keep our varied ranks together. May I add that my admiration for his keen intelligence and rare insight has grown from year to year during the past twenty years that I have been privileged to know him? I pressed him to agree to stand for the presidentship and so did many others. We had thought that we had convinced him, but unfortunately he did not agree finally. His weak health and his dislike of publicity and election contests came in his way'.

12. Gandhi on 'Internal Decay' in the Congress

Harijan, 28 January 1939, see also *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 320–21.

Bardoli
23 January 1939

My time and that of co-workers is largely taken up in wading through complaints about corruption among Congressmen. The latest typical letter received is from a Bombay Congressman:

Tripuri Congress delegates' elections took place last Sunday in Bombay. The voting was to start at 8 a.m. in the morning. I reached Congress House at nearly 8.45 a.m., but to my consternation I found that I had already been impersonated in the short span of forty-five minutes. Scores of others had the same experience. I tried to trace the source, and though (as expected) I could not trace the miscreant I found that this impersonation business was regularly organized and practiced on a mass scale as soon as the polling had started. Naturally those who came even half an hour late were disappointed, they having been impersonated meanwhile.

Many suggestions have been made to you to abate this nuisance, but in my humble opinion unless we introduce the system of asking the prospective voters to produce their membership cards to be duly stamped by the issuing officers before slips are issued to them, nothing will do the trick....

The correspondent's suggestion is quite sound. I should have thought that every voter had to produce an identification card before being allowed to register his vote.

My purpose, however, in reproducing the correspondent's letter is not merely to draw attention to the impersonation in Bombay and the method of dealing with it. The letter is a pointer. Besides impersonation there is the wholesale tampering with the Congress registers which contain bogus names. These registers have as much value as box containing counterfeit coins though it is claimed to contain rupees. Strife at Congress elections is becoming a common occurrence. The indiscipline of Congressmen is on the increase everywhere. Many of them make irresponsible, even violent, speeches. Many fail to carry out instructions. Bihar is a notable example. Kisans of Bihar are supposed to be Congressmen. Their leaders are Congressmen. Bihar Ministers live in perpetual dread of kisan risings and kisan marches. Only two days ago I had a wire from Khandesh of a contemplated march to the Collector's bungalow by kisans headed by a well-known Congress worker. Such instances can be multiplied.

Rome's decline began long before it fell. The Congress, which has been nursed for over fifty years by the best brains of the country, will not fall the moment it has begun to decay. It need not fall at all, if the corruption is handled in time.

In my opinion the greatest work before the Congress will be to deal with this fourfold process of decay. We are yet far from our goal. We shall be no nearer to it if we are not sure of our means and their meaning and implications. When the real time comes we shall be found wanting. If I was called upon to lead, say, an army of civil resisters, I should be unable to shoulder the burden. This is a big admission to make. But I should be guilty of cowardice and worse if I did not make it. Though there is non-violence enough among the masses, there is not enough among those who have to organize the masses. Even as a banker cannot run a bank if he has nothing in his chest, so can a general not lead a battle if he has no soldiers on whom he can rely implicitly.

Let no Congressman blame me for thinking aloud. Though I am not in the Congress, I have not ceased to be of it. Congressmen still expect me to give the call when in my opinion the time for action has come. What is more, if God so wills it, I feel I have enough strength and energy in me to lead a battle much more strenuous than any I have fought. But there are Saharas in the way. I have mentioned one which Congressmen can see, touch and handle. The Congress would not be harmed by my having lifted the curtain and exposing our uglinesses to the public gaze. It would be harmed if knowing the truth I hid it from the public.

Out of the present condition of the Congress I see nothing but anarchy and red ruin in front of the country. Shall we face the truth at Tripuri?

13. Congress Presidential Election

'Six Congress Working Committee Members' statement', *Tribune*, 25 January 1939.

Bardoli

24 January 1939

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Mr Jairamdas Doulatram,¹ Acharya Kripalani, Mr Shankar Rao Deo and Mr Bhulabhai Desai, member of the All India Congress Working Committee, issued the following statement regarding the presidential election:

'We have read Subhas Babu's statement² with the care it deserves. So far as we know, hitherto presidential elections have been unanimous. Subhas Babu has set up a new precedent which he had a perfect right to do. The wisdom of the course adopted by him can be known only by experience. We have grave doubts about it. We would have waited for a greater consolidation of the Congress ranks, great toleration and greater respect of one another's opinions before making the Congress presidential election a matter of contest. We would have gladly refrained from saying anything upon the statement. But we feel that we would be neglecting our clear duty when we hold strong views about the forthcoming election.

It was a matter of deep sorrow to us that the Maulana Sahib felt called upon to withdraw from the contest. But when he had finally decided to withdraw, he had advocated Dr Pattabhi's election in consultation with some of us. This decision was taken with much deliberation. We feel that it is a sound policy to adhere to the rule of not re-electing the same president except under very exceptional circumstances.

In his statement Subhas Babu has mentioned his opposition to Federation. This is shared by all members of the Working Committee. It is the Congress policy. He has also mentioned ideologies, policies and programmes. All this we feel is not relevant to the consideration of the choice of Congress President. The Congress policy and programmes are not determined by its successive presidents; if it were so; the constitution would not limit the office to one year. The policy and programmes of the Congress, when they are not determined by the Congress itself, are determined by the Working Committee. The position of the President is that of a chairman. More than this the President represents and symbolizes as under a constitutional monarchy, the unity and solidarity of the nation. This position, therefore, has rightly been considered as one of very great honour and, as such, the nation has sought to confer it on as many of its illustrious sons as would be possible by annual elections. The election, as befits the dignity of this high office, has always been unanimous and controversy over the election, even on the score of policies and programmes, is, therefore, to be deprecated. We believe, that Dr Pattabhi is quite fitted for the post of the president of the Congress. He is one of the oldest members of the Working Committee and he had a long and unbroken record of public service to his credit. We, therefore, commend his name to the Congress delegates for election. We would also ask his colleagues to urge on Subhas Babu to reconsider his decision and allow Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya's election to be unanimous.'³

¹ Jairamdas Daulatram (b. 1891); an influential leader from Sind; secretary of the Provincial Political Conference and president of the All Sind Students' Conference (1918); editor of the *Hindustan Times* (1925–27); secretary of the All India Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee (1928) and member of the Congress Working Committee until 1940; held ministerial positions after independence and served as governor of Bihar and Assam (1950–56); general editor of *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* from 1956 to 1958.

² 'In view of the situation created by the withdrawal of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and after reading the statement that he has issued, it is imperative for me to say something on the subject of the impending Presidential election ... The progressive sharpening of the anti-Imperialist struggle in India has given birth to new ideas, ideologies, problems and programmes. People are consequently veering round to the opinion that, as in other free countries, the Presidential election in India should be fought on the basis of definite problems and programmes... An election contest in these circumstances may not be an undesirable thing. Up till now I have not received any suggestion or advice from a single delegate asking me to withdraw from the contest. On the contrary, I have been nominated as a candidate from several provinces without my knowledge or consent and I have been receiving pressing requests from socialists as well as non-socialists in different parts of the country urging me not to retire... I shall be failing in my duty if I shirk any responsibility which may be cast on me. In view of the increasing international tension and the prospective fight over Federation, the new year will be a momentous one in our national history. Owing to this and other reasons, if my services in office are demanded by the majority of the delegates, with what justification can I withdraw from the contest when the issue involved is not a personal one at all?... In view of all these considerations I am constrained to feel that I have no right to retire from the contest. I am therefore placing myself unreservedly in the hands of my fellow delegates and I shall abide by their decisions.' Statement issued on 21 January.

³ In response, Bose issued a counter-statement the same day. He stated: 'It is an extremely painful task for me to engage a public controversy with some of my distinguished colleagues on the Working Committee but, as matters stand, I have no option in the matter....'

'If the Presidential election is to be an election worth the name, there should be freedom of voting without any moral coercion. But does not a statement of this sort tantamount to moral coercion? If the President is to be elected by the delegates and not be nominated by influential members of the Working Committee, will Sardar Patel and other leaders withdraw their whip and leave it to the delegates to vote as they like? If the delegates are given the freedom to vote as they like, there would not be the slightest doubt as to the issue of the election contest. Otherwise, why not end the elective system and have the President nominated by the Working Committee?'

'It is news to me that there is a rule that the same person should not be reelected President except under exceptional circumstances. If one traces the history of the Congress one will find that in several cases the same person has been elected more than once. I am also surprised at the remark that Presidential elections have hitherto been unanimous. I remember to have voted for one candidate in preference to another on several occasions. It is only in recent years that the election has been unanimous....'

'I may add that questions of policy and programme are not irrelevant and they would have been raised long ago in connection with the election of the Congress President had it not been for the fact that after the Congress of 1934, a Leftist has been elected President every time with the support of both the Right and Left Wings. The departure from this practice this year and the attempt to set up a Rightist candidate for the office of President is not without significance. It is widely believed that there is a prospect of a compromise on the Federal Scheme between the Right wing of the Congress and the British Government during the coming year. Consequently the Right wing do not want a Leftist President who may be a thorn in the way of a compromise and may put obstacles in the path of negotiations. One has only to move about among the public and enter into a discussion with them in order to realize how widespread this belief is. It is imperative, in the circumstances, to have a President who will be an anti-federationist to the core of his heart.'

'It is really [a matter of] regret that my name has been proposed as a candidate for Presidentship. I had suggested to numerous friends that a new candidate from the Left should be put up this year, but unfortunately that could not be done and my name was proposed from several provinces. Even at this late hour I am prepared to withdraw from the contest if a genuine anti-federationist, like Acharya Narendra Deva for instance, be accepted as the President for the coming year.'

'I feel strongly that we should have, during this momentous year, a genuine anti-federationist in the Presidential chair. If the Right wing really want national unity and solidarity, they would be well-advised to accept a Leftist as President. They have created considerable misapprehension by their insistence on a Rightist candidate at any cost and by the unseemly manner in which they have set up such a candidate who was retiring and who had been surprised that his name had been suggested for the Presidentship.'

'In the exceptional circumstances which prevail just at this moment in our country, the Presidential election is part of our fight against the Federal scheme and as such we cannot afford to be indifferent to it. The real issue before the country is the Federal scheme. All those who believe in fighting Federation and in maintaining our national solidarity in this crisis should not endeavour to split the Congress by insisting on a candidate who was voluntarily retiring. The Presidential election is wholly an affair of the delegates and should be left to them. Let the Right wing, who are in a decided majority in the Congress, make a gesture to the Left wing by accepting a Leftist candidate even at this late hour. I hope that my appeal will not be in vain.'

14. The Congress Presidentship

Editorial, *Hindu*, 25 January 1939.

25 January 1939

The public controversy that has arisen over the Congress presidentship is as unnecessary as it is undesirable. We do not, therefore, propose to enquire who began it or to apportion the blame for it. It would be more to the point to examine Mr Subhas Chandra Bose's plea that a contested election for the Presidentship is 'not an undesirable thing' at present. 'The progressive sharpening of the anti-Imperialistic struggle in India', he said in his first statement, 'has given birth to new ideas, ideologies, problems and programmes. People are consequently veering round to the opinion that, as in other free countries, the Presidential election in India should be fought on the basis of definite problems and programmes, so that the contest may help the clarification of issues and give a clear indication of the working of the public mind.' We are not aware of any exact analogy

in 'other free countries' to the election of the Congress President in India; this apart, what may suit 'free countries' may not suit India, circumstanced as she is....

Bose has referred to the ideological differences, but he should know that if leaders with Left Wing views were elected to the presidential chair in the past three years, it was not because of those views but primarily because they were men who had done distinguished service to the country.... The Congress, as everybody knows, covers a considerable variety of opinion on socio-economic questions, representing as it does all sections of nationalists who are held together by the bond of devotion to the country and who work for the common purpose of achieving her freedom 'The progressive sharpening of the anti-Imperialistic struggle' makes it all the more necessary that the national character of the great organization should be maintained intact, where as if Mr Subhas Bose's ideas were to find acceptance, it would be reduced to the status of a mere party.

It seems to us that Mr Bose is as unfair to the Socialists as to the Right Wing leaders when he says in his second statement that 'questions of policy and programme are not irrelevant and they would have been raised long ago in connection with the election of the Congress President had it not been for the fact that, after the Congress election of 1934, a Leftist has been elected President every time with the support of both the Right and Left Wings.' The implication here seems to be that if the Right Wing had not placated the Left by electing one of its leaders as President every time, it would have made trouble. And Mr Bose, in fact, so far forgets himself as to use the language of threat, saying, 'If the Right Wing really want national unity and solidarity, they would be well advised to accept a Leftist as President.' Mr Jawaharlal Nehru who was unanimously elected Congress President two times in succession—not because of his Leftist views—had a far truer conception of the presidential function as well as of the motives which influenced the Congress in thus honouring him. The Congress, during his term of office, took a momentous decision on the office acceptance question with which Mr Nehru was personally in profound disagreement. But he did not allow this to stand in the way of his loyalty carrying out the Congress decision, rightly holding that national unity in the face of the dangers that threaten the freedom movement on all sides is neither the time nor is there any justification for departing from established practice in the matter of electing the President.

It were greatly to be wished that Mr Bose had not permitted himself to make the remarks which he has made on the personal aspect of the controversy. It was, to say the least, ungracious of him to suggest that he alone is sincere in opposing Federation and that Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya whose candidature other leaders have favoured may not be 'a President who will be anti-federationist to the core of his heart.' He makes great play of the fact that Dr Pattabhi was prepared to withdraw his candidature if so desired; but we should think that preparedness to step aside in favour of another man, especially when it would involve a great personal sacrifice, is an argument not for ignoring such a leader's claims, but for giving him the recognition that is his due. We fully endorse the tribute that Sardar Patel and other leaders have paid Dr Pattabhi in their statement in which they point out that he is one of the oldest members of the Working Committee and 'has a long and unbroken record of public service to his credit.' We would earnestly suggest to Mr Bose that it would be graceful as well as statesman-like for him to withdraw his candidature and allow Dr Pattabhi to be unanimously elected.



15. Independence Day

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 25 January 1939.

25 January 1939

Tomorrow, the 26th January, will be observed as Independence Day all over the country. The necessity for observing this function is greater today than it was at any time before. This may sound paradoxical. The political conditions of today show in one sense a vast improvement over what obtained even five years back. Provincial Autonomy is now in force in the whole of British India. In the greater part of the Indian continent in nine out of eleven provinces the Congress writ runs today. Ministers in these Congress Provinces are able to bring into the administration a spirit of nationalism and independence which it was difficult to visualize a few years back. How could it then be said with any degree of plausibility that steps should be taken to celebrate the observance of the Independence Day with greater enthusiasm than was done in the past?

Well, the answer is simple. In the fight for independence a stage is generally reached when people achieve a considerable amount of success in their endeavours and this is done by them mostly at a time when the rank and file among the fighters and even some of the generals themselves feel fatigued. Naturally, therefore, they feel a temptation to rest on their oars and remain satisfied with what has been achieved. A tendency even manifests itself of confusing appearance with reality or forming an exaggerated notion of what has been attained. Then comes the necessary to whip up the enthusiasm of the fighters to new endeavours, to remind them of the ground to be covered and of the heights still to be reached. It is a very difficult task, particularly because of the war-weariness of large numbers of tried soldiers and of the inevitable weakness of the human mind which disinclines man to risk what has been contained in the search for what has not been, even though the latter seems to be this task, it has got to be undertaken in the interest of the ultimate goal. The fight has got to be commenced anew. And the warning of the sages has to be remembered that true happiness does not consist in the achievement of the little but in that of all and that the quest for the Holy Grail constitutes the supreme duty as well as the blessedness of human life.

This is exactly the situation today in India. The power that has been so far achieved by the country in the sphere of Provincial administration is leading many people to forget that the goal of independence, of an autonomous India free to work out her destiny and evolve what has been latent in her genius, is yet far off. The achievements of the Congress Ministries may turn the heads of even some of our sturdy and far sighted fighters. Constitutionalism even in its old form which the Congress once definitely discarded seems to be now once again in favour in some quarters. The spirit of Independence, the spirit of the fighters, is running the risk of either being overshadowed by a feeling of complacency or is about to totally disappear. Today therefore, more than ever, it is a paramount necessity in the interest of the success of our freedom movement to hold aloft the banner of real independence. Today, therefore, our countrymen should be asked once more to shake off their self-compliance or stupor and rally round this banner with a fresh determination to bring the remaining part of the struggle to a successful close.

It has been most unfortunate that a very large section of our Muslim countrymen have so far taken no prominent part or even interest in the celebration of this Independence function. There is nothing communal about this observance, there is nothing in it to which no community if it sincerely wants the substance of independence for the country can take any reasonable exception. The All India Muslim League has also passed a resolution accepting independence as their goal. If the Muslim leaders and the followers of the League mean what they say, they ought to come forward and observe the 26th of January as the day on which to renew their resolve to work for it

with the rest of their countrymen. If they have any prejudice against the national flag—or ‘Vandemataram’—they may discard that particular part of the programme in which flag hoisting or the singing of the national song is enjoined. But why they should stand aloof from the rest of the functions is beyond our comprehension.

This year one is delighted to notice the eagerness on the part of some Anglo-Indian leaders to participate in the Independence Day celebrations. The appeal which Mr C. Gibbon, founder of the Anglo-Indian Civil Liberties Association, has issued in this connection deserves careful notice. He has asked the Anglo-Indian community to give up their apathy to the struggle for independence in India and rally round the banner of the Indian National Congress which stands for a free and united India. He has asked them to do so not merely for their own advancement but as an indication of a definite pledge to live with Indians as friends and ‘fight side by side with them for the freedom of this our motherland’; we hope the appeal will not go in vain.

The Indian National Congress is fighting for the birth of a new India in which no one community in particular will gain ascendancy over the rest of the population by virtue of their superiority in numbers but all who will take part in freedom’s battle, all who will suffer and sacrifice for the achievement of freedom, will have their influence in the future Government of India according to their contribution to the success of the struggle. At the same time no one, not even those who would deliberately cause hindrance to victory will be denied the fundamental rights of an individual and a community. The independence pledge that will be taken tomorrow by thousands of India’s brave soldiers has been intended to lend strength to this fight. All sections of the people who desire to see the country free should, therefore, eagerly come forward and renew this pledge.

16. The Vidarbha Congress Committee:

M.S. Aney to Patwardhan, 25 January 1939

M.S. Aney Papers, Part 2, Subject File No. 11, 1939–40, NMML.

Yeotmal
25 January 1939

My dear Doctor Patwardhan,

You are already aware that the elected members of the Provincial Congress Committee will be meeting at Akola on the 29th instant to transact the following business:

- (i) Election of President of the Tripuri sessions of the I.N. Congress,
- (ii) Election of members of the All India Congress Committee.

The Presidential election has unfortunately become question of a controversial nature. I am inclined to support the candidature of Mr Subhas Chandra Bose. I will however like to know what Amraoti friends of mine and I hold him in great esteem also. But considering the issues which are likely to come into prominence during the coming year, I think it will be right to representation-elect Subhas Bose. He made his position perfectly clear in the statement issued by him the other day. I do feel that Maulana Kalam Azad did not behave fairly in withdrawing his candidature in favour of Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya. He therefore did an act of canvassing which was not expected of a man of his positions. As he knew that Subhas was a candidate for the next year’s office, his preference for the other candidate shown by his withdrawal in his favour only indicates that he does not regard Mr Bose as worthy of his confidence in future. The world outside does not know what were the points of difference between the President and some of his colleagues. But that there were such points, goes without saying. Without the existence of some keen difference of

opinion on some vital points, the action of Maulana Kalam Azad is inexplicable. That is my reading of the situation. I will start on 29th morning to attend the meeting of the delegates at Akola.

There is one more point to which I wish to refer. It is in relation to the election of members on the All India Congress Committee. The system of voting is by single transferable vote. Among the 35, the group which stands behind you is that of 10 or 11 members only, including myself. This group can return only one member and not more.

If you are anxious to go to the All India Congress Committee, I frankly tell you that I will be very happy to support you. I don't want you to be unnecessarily modest. I will willingly agree not to stand and offer myself as a candidate. But if you don't want to go, then and then only, I desire to stand for the seat on that committee. All members of your group from Amraoti and Yeotmal will have to record their first preference for the candidate and assert our existence.

In this connection, I am very anxious to move the Working Committee this year to adopt the main principles of the constitution Committee. That report lays great stress upon the efficient working of the District Congress Committees. If this is carried then the part of the Provincial Congress Committee's constitution inconsistent with this portion of the AICC constitution will naturally drop down, as it will have to be modified to bring it in line with the Congress constitution. Besides, I think that the time has come when the Congress must insist on some radical reforms to make the organization efficient and free from nepotism and corruption.

I want the regular checking of Congress accounts of all Congress bodies by auditors. The present system of auditing is very defective. Depositing of Congress funds by Taluk, District and Provincial Committees in some Banks on the approved list must be insisted. This is one of the ways to cut the knot of bogus membership.

The system of appointing some capitalist as a Treasurer is baneful. The New Congress Committees generally start every year with a clean slate as the preceding Committees neither hand over the preceding Committees accounts nor the cash to the succeeding Committees.

There are some other minor reforms which have to be brought about in the constitution. I am opposed to the recommendation recently made by Mahatma Gandhi that the elected membership should be open to those who spin a certain number of yards of cotton thread in his own hand. This will encourage hypocrisy of the worst kind and will certainly not minimize corruption.

I thought that I should give you some idea as to how I have been thinking of late and that is the justification to write this somewhat long letter.

With my best regards for you,

Yours sincerely,

17. Satyamurti on Federation: Vallabhbhai Patel to
Satyamurti, 26 January 1939

Satyamurti Papers, Subject File No. 18/1939, NMML.

My dear Satyamurti,

Your telegram was received by me here on the 24th instant, but I was busy and I could not reply. It is true that your statements on the question of Federation were discussed in the Working Committee at the instance of the President informally. All members of the Working Committee felt that your statements on this question create embarrassment and it would be better if you put a little strain on yourself and not make public statements on the question which had been decided by the Congress differing from or creating controversy on that decision. Of course, the president

was very strong in his attitude of condemnation, but there was no question of disciplinary action being taken against you. I would advice you not to give an irritating reply.

You must have noticed his statements on the question of his reelection and my reply also. It is a clear-cut issue that will be fought on principles and it is good that he has forced it. I hope you are keeping good health. Remember me to Laxmi and her mother.

18. Nation's Pledge to Independence

Bombay Chronicle, 27 January 1939.

27 January 1939

Slogans of 'Congress Zindabad' resounding in every ward of Bombay from early morning till nightfall, remaining one of the glorious days of Satyagraha movement, motor trucks flying Congress tri-colour and patrolling the main streets distributing copies of the independence day pledge, procession of cyclists going round the city distributing miniature Congress flags, a mammoth procession led by Bhulabhai Desai terminating in a meeting at Chowpatty, where fifteen thousand citizens took the pledge, formed the main items in the programme observed by the city of Bombay in connection with the Independence Day. Three hundred Municipal schools and the majority of the private colleges remained closed.

Reports from Calcutta, Delhi, Peshawar, Bannu, Lucknow and Madras indicate record enthusiasm and mass celebrations. Disturbances and assaults are reported from Rawalpindi, Gaya and Allahabad which seem to have marred the solemnity of the occasion.

19. 'We Renew Solemn Pledge of Independence':

Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's Declaration

Tribune, 28 January 1939.

Peshawar

26 January 1939

'Ten years ago on the banks of the Ravi we took the solemn pledge of independence. We renew it today with hope and determination and should strive on ceaselessly until the goal of complete independence is reached. Those who are out to fight for the cause of freedom should be ready to undergo the severest hardship and ordeal. We have made considerable headway on the path of freedom but the journey's end is not yet sighted and the pilgrims of freedom cannot afford to rest on the way.' This moving declaration was made by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan at a mammoth gathering at Mardan, forty miles from here where before a huge assembly running into 20,000 he read out the Independence Pledge in Pushto. He said it being a solemn day we must render account of our failures and ask ourselves why we had not won freedom yet. He added: 'Not through idle talk, but by determined and organized action nations break the bonds of slavery. Let us all who inhabit this dear land of ours unite to see the early fulfillment of that solemn pledge of independence which we renew today.'



20. Presidential Election

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 28 February 1939.

28 February 1939

The controversy about the Congress Presidential election has unfortunately, taken a somewhat acrimonious turn. The election might well have been uncontested, as it has been for the last many years. But that, it seems, is now out of the question. Once it was clear that a contest was inevitable, some discussion or controversy was also inevitable. But the controversy should have been carried on dispassionately and on wholly relevant issues without any misrepresentation of facts and attributing of motives. Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, however, is not, we regret to have to say, conducting the controversy on these lines.

Mr Bose has every right to canvass support for his own candidature for Presidentship or for that of any other 'Leftist'. But he should not, in doing so misrepresent the other side. By suggesting in his statements that all those, who support a non-Leftist group, are anxious to compromise Congress opposition to Federation, he is grossly misrepresenting a vast majority of Congressmen.¹ In his latest statement he not only doubts his rival's being a 'genuine anti-federationist', but also goes so far as to suggest—by the familiar device of seemingly only to refer to a common report—that 'during the coming year a compromise will be effected between the British Government and the right wing of the Congress.'² He is not satisfied with this wanton suggestion. He goes further and countenances the vile and irresponsible rumour that 'the prospective list of Ministers for the Federal Cabinet has been already drawn up.' Mr Bose will doubtless defend himself by saying that he is only referring to a report 'generally believed'. But in making the report, an argument for not electing a Right Wing President he assumes the report to be well-grounded. Else there is no point in referring to it. This may or may not be an effective eleventh hour vote-catching device, but it is hardly fair.

Mr Bose's main argument, apart from his manner of urging it, is that because Federation is the vital issue next year, the President must be a 'genuine anti-federationist.' The argument is not convincing. In the first place it is not fair to assume, as does Mr Bose, that Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya is not a 'genuine anti-federationist', merely because he does not declaim incessantly against Federation. Secondly, the precise policy with regard to Federation or any other vital issue is to be laid down, not by the President, but by the Congress or the AICC and the President has loyally to carry out that policy. Thirdly, as even such an uncompromising anti-federationist as Pandit Jawaharlal acknowledges, there is no conflict in the Congress with regard to Federation. Finally, if Mr Bose is right in demanding that the President must be a Leftist because Federation is a vital issue next year, the same argument must apply with greater force to the selection of the Working Committee. Does Mr Bose suggest that the committee, too, should be wholly or predominantly Leftist? That would be a hazardous course, at any rate at the present moment. In the interests of national unity the selection of neither the Working Committee nor the President should be, at present, on party lines. Mr Bose not only thinks differently but he even holds out a thinly veiled threat when he says: 'If the Right Wing really wants national unity and solidarity they would be well advised to accept a Leftist as President.' We still hope wiser counsels will prevail and that national unity will not be jeopardized by party feuds and threats.

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Bose on 4 February: 'There has been a lot of talk of leftists and rightists, of Federation, etc. and yet, so far as I can remember, no vital matters affecting these questions have been discussed by us in the Working Committee during your presidentship. I do not know who you consider a leftist and who a rightist. The way these words were used by you in your statements during the presidential contest seemed to imply that Gandhiji and those who are

considered as his group in the Working Committee are the rightist leaders. Their opponents, whoever they might be, are the leftists. That seems to me an entirely wrong description. It seems to me that many of the so-called leftists are more right than the so-called rightists. Strong language and a capacity to criticize and attack the old Congress leadership is not a test of leftism in politics....

'I think the use of the words left and right has been generally wholly wrong and confusing. If, instead of these words, we talked about politics it would be far better. What policy do you stand for? Anti-federation, well and good. I think that the great majority of the members of the Working Committee stand for that and it is not fair to hint at their weakness in this respect. Would it not have been better for you to discuss this matter fully in the Working Committee or even to bring forward a resolution on the subject and then note the reactions? Surely without first fully discussing a matter with your colleagues it was hardly to accuse them *en bloc* of back-sliding....'

² For instance, in a statement on 24 January 1939, Subhas Bose had said: 'It is widely believed that there is a prospect of a compromise on the Federal Scheme between the right wing of the Congress and the British Government during the coming year. Consequently, the right wing do not want a leftist President who may be a thorn in the way of a compromise and may put obstacles in the path of negotiations.'

21. Report of the Constitution Sub-Committee of the UP Provincial Congress Committee

AICC Papers, File No. G-31, NMML.

30 January 1939

At its meeting dated 30th January 1939 the Executive Council of the UP Provincial Congress Committee appointed a sub-committee to consider the changes in the Congress constitution recommended by the Constitution Committee appointed by the Haripura Congress, as also to examine the proposed changes in the UP Provincial Constitution.

At a subsequent meeting held on the 21st May 1939 the Council instructed the sub-committee to forward its recommendations to the Committee appointed by the AICC at Calcutta for the purification of the Congress. The following members of the Council constituted the sub-committee:

(1) Shri Purushottam Das Tandon,¹ (2) Acharya Narendra Deva, (3) Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri,² (4) Shri Vishambhar Dayal Tripathi and (5) Dr Z.A. Ahmad.³

The Committee could not meet for sometime due to the unfortunate illness of Shri Purushottam Das Tandon. It finally met on the 18th, 19th and 21st May 1939. The members present were Acharya Narendra Deva, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri and Dr Z.A. Ahmad. Shri Purushottam Das Tandon and Shri Vishambhar Dayal Tripathi could not attend the meeting due to ill-health.

The Committee considered the changes recommended by the Constitution Committee appointed at Haripura. It also discussed the question of corruption in the Congress organization. The unanimous recommendations of the Committee are given below:

Advisability or otherwise of indirect elections

The Committee suggests that:

1. The members of the Mandal Ward and Halka Committees should be elected directly by the primary members,
2. The elections to the district, city and town Congress Committees should be indirect. The members of the these Committees should be elected by the members of the Mandal Ward and Halka Committees who should form electoral colleges for the purpose of these elections. In the case of those district, city or town Committees which have no subordinate Halka, Mandal or Ward Committees, the election of the members should be direct and should be made by the primary members.

3. The present system of the election of delegates to the Congress and members of the PCC should be retained, that is, the delegates and the members of the PCC should be elected directly by the primary members. To save trouble and expense it would be advisable to hold the election of the members of the mandal, ward and halka committees and the election of delegates and the members of the PCC at the same time. In order to facilitate simultaneous elections constituencies may be permanently fixed. If the elections are held in permanently fixed constituencies, it may be advisable to prescribe a minimum quota of membership for the constituencies in order to avoid decrease in membership.

In case the present system of the election of delegates and members of the PCC is discontinued, the Committee suggests that the provincial Congress Committee should not be constituted by the delegates but should be composed of the members elected indirectly by the district, city and town Congress Committees on the principle of proportional representation by single transferable vote. The delegates should in this case be elected directly by the primary members.

4. The present system of election to the All India Congress Committee on the principle of proportional representation by single transferable vote should be retained. The territorial representation on the AICC according to the provinces as prevails at present should also be retained.

Enrolment of Congress Members

The Committee suggests the following amendments to the representations made by the All India Constitution Committee in this respect:

1. The District Congress Committees should not be made responsible for getting membership forms printed. All membership forms should be supplied directly by the PCC to the Districts.
2. All members of Taluqua, Mandal, Ward and Halka committees should be entitled to obtain membership forms from the District Congress Committee.

Electoral Rolls

The Committee agrees with all the suggestions made in this respect by the Constitution Committee.

Election Machinery

The Committee suggests that in each province the PCC should set up a Provincial Tribunal for the purpose of conducting Congress elections and deciding all disputes arising therefrom.

The Tribunal should consist of three persons appointed by the Executive Council of the PCC. Any person whose name is opposed by 1/7 of the membership of the Executive Council should not be appointed to serve on the Tribunal.

The members of the Tribunal should not be entitled to seek election to any Congress Committee.

The Tribunal should be authorized to make rules and regulations governing Congress elections, to set up machinery for the enforcement of those rules and regulations, and to make all other necessary arrangements in connection with elections to Congress committees.

The Tribunal should further be authorized to decide all disputes arising out of election contests and to take disciplinary action against persons found guilty of violating the election rules.

The Provincial Tribunal should be authorized to set up district tribunals to conduct and control elections and to decide local disputes arising out of election contests. The district tribunals should function directly under the supervision and control of the Provincial Tribunal.

The decisions of the Provincial and district tribunals should be made binding on all Congress committees and there should be no appeal against those decisions to any Congress Committee.

Suggestions for Preventing Corruption

The Committee suggests that all primary members seeking election to the Congress committees should have following qualifications:

1. They should be habitual wearer of Khaddar.
2. They should show three years' continuous membership previous to the late date for the enrolment of members in the year in which they seek election to any Committee. (The Provincial Council should have the right to exempt any individual from this rule)
3. They should pay at least 1% of their income to any Congress Committee, the minimum amount being not less than one rupee per year.
4. They should spin at least 5000 yards of Khaddar every year, or should satisfy one of the following work tests:
 - (a) Enrolling at least 100 members of the Congress.
 - (b) Placing one's services at the disposal of the local Congress Committee at the rate of three days in a month and carrying out the instructions of the office bearers of the local committee during that period.
 - (c) Giving sufficient time to any other work approved for this purpose by the local Congress Committee. This category should include the work done on an honorary basis in the offices of the Congress Committee or in connection with the general Congress propaganda.

No primary member should be allowed to contest the elections unless he holds a certificate issued by the Executive Council of the Provincial Congress Committee stating that he satisfies the above tests.

The recommendations of the Committee are unanimous. Shris Purushottam Das Tandon and Vishambhar Dayal Tripathi have not signed the report on account of their inability to participate in the deliberations of the Committee.

Narendra Deva
Z.A. Ahmad
Lal Bahadur

¹ Purushottam Das Tandon (1882–1961); born in and educated at Allahabad; practiced for a while as the junior of T.B. Saprú before joining the Nabha State as Land Minister (1914–27); involved in the non-cooperation movement; president of the Gorakhpur district Congress Committee (1923); member of the CWC in 1931; associated with the Kisan Sabha in the 1920s and the 1930s; speaker of the UP legislative assembly in 1937–38; elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1946, to the Lok Sabha in 1952 and to the Rajya Sabha in 1956.

² Lal Bahadur Shastri (1904–66); educated at the Kashi Vidyapeeth in Benaras; actively involved in the Congress activities in Allahabad; general secretary of the UP Provincial Congress Committee (1935–37); secretary of the UP Parliamentary Board after his election to the legislative assembly in 1937; held various portfolios in the Cabinet after independence; India's prime minister from 1964 until his death at Tashkent in January 1966.

³ Zainul Abedin Ahmad (b. 1908); educated at the Aligarh Muslim University, the University College London and the London School of Economics; joined the Economic Information Department of the AICC in 1936 and was, along with K.M. Ashraf, an organizer of the Muslim Mass Contact Campaign; one of the founders of the Congress Socialist Party; arrested and placed in Deoli Detention Camp (1940–42); a key figure in the Communist Party of India; member of its Central Committee (1951–58) and Politburo (1953–58); member of the Rajya Sabha (1958–62; 1966–72).



22. Gandhi's Statement to the Press

CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 359–60, 31 January 1939.

Bardoli
31 January 1939

Shri Subhas Bose has achieved a decisive victory over his opponent, Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya.¹ I must confess that from the very beginning I was decidedly against his re-election for reasons into which I need not go. I do not subscribe to his facts or the arguments in his manifestos. I think that his references to his colleagues were unjustified and unworthy. Nevertheless, I am glad of his victory. And since I was instrumental in inducing Dr Pattabhi not to withdraw his name as a candidate when Maulana Saheb withdrew, the defeat is more mine than his. I am nothing if I do not represent definite principles and policy. Therefore, it is plain to me that the delegates do not approve of the principles and policy for which I stand.

I rejoice in this defeat. It gives me an opportunity of putting into practice what I preached in my article on the walk-out of the minority at the last AICC meeting in Delhi. Subhas Babu, instead of being President on the sufferance of those whom he calls rightists, is now President elected in a contested election. This enables him to choose a homogeneous cabinet and enforce his programme without let or hindrance.

There is one thing common between majority and minority, viz., insistence on internal purity of the Congress organization. My writings in the *Harijan* have shown that the Congress is fast becoming a corrupt organization in the sense that its registers contain a very large number of bogus members. I have been suggesting for the past many months the overhauling of these registers. I have no doubt that many of the delegates who have been elected on the strength of these bogus voters would be unseated on scrutiny. But I suggest no such drastic step. It will be enough if the registers are purged of all bogus voters and are made fool-proof for the future.

The minority has no cause for being disheartened. If they believe in the current programme of the Congress, they will find that it can be worked, whether they are in a minority or a majority and even whether they are in the Congress or outside it.

The only thing that may possibly be affected by the changes is the parliamentary programme. The ministers have been chosen and the programme shaped by the erstwhile majority. But parliamentary work is but a minor item of the Congress programme. Congress ministers have after all to live from day to day. It matters little to them whether they are recalled on an issue in which they are in agreement with the Congress policy or whether they resign because they are in disagreement with the Congress.

After all Subhas Babu is not an enemy of his country. He has suffered for it. In his opinion his is the most forward and boldest policy and programme. The minority can only wish it all success. If they cannot keep pace with it, they must come out of the Congress. If they can, they will add strength to the majority.

The minority may not obstruct on any account. They must abstain when they cannot cooperate. I must remind all Congressmen that those who, being Congress-minded, remain outside it by design, represent it most. Those, therefore, who feel uncomfortable in being in the Congress may come out, not in a spirit of ill-will, but with the deliberate purpose of rendering more effective service.²

¹ On 29 January, Bose was re-elected President by a majority of 203 votes. The final figures were: Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, 1,580, Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, 1,377.

The following gives the voting figures Province by Province:

	<i>Pattabhi</i>	<i>Subhas Bose</i>
Tamil Nadu	102	110
Orissa (Utkal)	99	44
Burma	6	8
Gujarat	100	5
Punjab	86	182
Berar (Vidarbha)	21	11
Kerala	18	80
Bengal	79	404
Andhra	181	28
United Provinces	185	269
Delhi	5	10
Bihar	197	70
Maharashtra	86	77
Assam	22	34
Ajmer–Merwara	6	20
Mahakoshal	68	67
Karnatak	41	106
Sind	21	13
Nagpur	17	12
Bombay City	14	12

² In his letter to the Secretary of State for India on 31 January, the Viceroy expressed the view that Gandhi's manifesto was 'worded so intricately that one has to study it with utmost care to make quite sure where one stands at any point of the argument, and when one has finished cogitating over it, one is still left in some little doubt as to what his attitude to his intentions are. I should myself have thought that he was ill-advised, things having gone as they have, to issue a statement so roundly critical of Bose and his supporters.' As regards the result of the election, the Viceroy felt that 'one finds a fairly general feeling that this is symptomatic of the growing strain between the right and the left. But there is also in many quarters.... the feeling that, on the whole, it is a victory for the left. I do not necessarily regard that as the case. I think it is quite possible that the Working Committee are paying the price of putting up a candidate little known and in no sense an all-India figure (a piece of gross mismanagement as things have turned out), and of assuming that their own position was so strong that they could rely on their nominee being chosen without a contested election.' The Viceroy concluded that the Mahatma 'has not hesitated to hit pretty hard, and despite its somewhat Sibylline character, it makes good reading.'

23. On Gandhi's Statement

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 2 February 1939.

2 February 1939

Gandhiji's statement on the Congress Presidential election and the circumstances that led to it threaten to precipitate a grave crisis in the Congress. To understand clearly the implications of the statement and its possible repercussions we have to note why precisely it has been found necessary. It would have been unnecessary if the election was on personal issues. But Mr Bose contested it on the issue that while he and the Leftists were genuine anti-federationists, Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya and his Rightist supporters were not such. As Federation is really a vital issue and as a majority of the delegates have apparently accepted Mr Bose's view in spite of the assurance of many member of the Working Committee of the Gandhian school of thought that Congress is undivided on the Federation issue, Gandhiji has assumed that 'the delegates do not approve of the principles and policy for which I stand.' It is on this assumption that he suggests a certain line of action for his followers, and on the correctness of the assumption will depend how far it will be expedient to follow that line.

But is the assumption correct? We do not think it is. We have already pointed out that the Presidential election was influenced by various factors which did not really reflect on the Gandhian policy or programme. Many, for instance, were influenced by the quite human personal and provincial bias. Only thus can we interpret the fact that in Andhra Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya got 181 votes as against 28 cast for Mr Bose and that in Bengal Mr Bose got as many as 404 votes as against 79 cast for his rival.¹ We have shown too how Dr Pattabhi has been made a scape-goat by many for their dissatisfaction—not necessarily justifiable—at the actions of this or that Congress Committee or Congress Government. These people seem to complain not against Gandhian policy or programme but against the manner in which that policy seems to be interpreted or implemented by some of his followers. It is also significant that a vast majority of the AICC members elected by the delegates consists of the so-called Rightists. These facts do not bear out Gandhiji's assumption that the delegates do not approve of his policy. The Calcutta papers, the *A.B. Patrika* and the *Hindustan Standard*, though they strongly supported Mr Bose's candidature, both agree that the election does not indicate disapproval of the principles and policy for which Gandhiji stands.

In the light of these facts let us examine the line of future action suggested by Gandhiji. He suggests first that a President 'elected in a contested election should choose a homogeneous cabinet and enforce his programme without let or hindrance.' Here again Gandhiji tacitly assumes that Mr Bose's programme will be materially different from the present one and it will necessarily be endorsed by the delegates at the Congress Session. But whatever might have been Mr Bose's views before election regarding different man's different degree of opposition to Federation, we do not think that he will now insist on a programme not acceptable to Gandhiji and his innumerable supporters in the country. And even if he should do so, we do not think the delegates will support him after a full discussion of all the issues. In any case one cannot be too sure about this now. Gandhiji's re-enunciation of his well-known views on the working of party programmes may do a great service if it brings out the fullest sense of responsibility that the delegates are capable of in the formulation of the Congress programme. But it will be premature and inexpedient to assume now what they will do in the Congress session. What the composition of Working Committee, the Parliamentary Board and the Congress Cabinets will be naturally depended to no small extent upon the resolutions of the plenary session. Every attempt should therefore be made even from now to see that the Tripuri session maintains a real united front in the nation's struggle for freedom.

¹ In Karnataka, on the other hand, the voting came as a surprise to many. What accounted for the majority for Subhas Bose was the popularity of the CSP in that Province and its strength in the PCC. There were three socialist members on its Council, with Kamaladevi as vice-President.

24. Secretary of State's Discussion with S. Radhakrishnan¹:

Zetland to Linlithgow, 5 February 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI.

... 3. Amongst my visitors last week was Sir S. Radhakrishnan, who has recently returned from India where he told me he had discussed the general situation with Gandhi, and other prominent personalities in the Congress. The burden of what he desired to submit to me was that Gandhi had made up his mind that Federation was desirable and that there should be little difficulty in coming to terms with us for the inauguration of it, provided only that a reasonable solution of the problem of the States could be reached. Radhakrishnan urged more particularly since the election of Subhas Bose as President of the Congress, that we should do nothing to alienate Gandhi and so drive him into the arms of the left wing. We had some considerable discussion on the question of constitutional

reforms in the States, and I told him in view of what he said as to Gandhi's attitude in this matter that the difference between us seemed to be not so much one of principle as of method and of pace. I told him that it was unreasonable to expect the Rulers to make dramatic changes in the form of government in their States without careful thought and examination... I reminded him that the introduction of responsible government in the Provinces of British India had been proceeded by many years of investigation by commissions, committees, conferences and so on, and I urged upon him the necessity, particularly in disorder. But I should doubt whether he is the man to deal with the situation which now prevails in the United Provinces. The change in Nehru's attitude towards the international situation is very marked, and I can well believe, bearing in mind what he told me when I saw him, that he might even go so far to give him support to His Majesty's Government in the policy which they are now adopting towards the threat of aggression on the part of the Dictators.

¹ Sir S. Radhakrishnan (1888–1981); Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford; educated in missionary institutions at Vellore and Madras, and was a teacher of philosophy at Madras, Mysore and Calcutta; appointed to the King George V Chair in Philosophy in the University of Calcutta, 1921–31; his teaching, lecturing and writing ability attracted wide attention, and he was invited to lecture in England and America; appointed Hibbert Lecturer 1929–30 on 'An Idealist View of Life', being the second Indian invited to that office; filled for a while the Chair of Comparative Religions at Manchester College, Oxford; Upton Lecturer, Oxford 1926; Haskel Lecturer, University of Chicago 1926; writings include an outstanding work on Indian Philosophy; Vice-President of India (1952–56 and 1957–62); President of India (1962–66).

25. The Congress Presidential Election: Brabourne¹ to Linlithgow, 5 February 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2181, NAI.

9. ... There is an interesting parallelism between the whole trend of information now and in the years preceding 1930. Of course, there are important differences also, the most obvious being that Muslim leaders have a considerable degree of control over the Muslim masses and are alive to the necessity of keeping the masses behind them—at the cost, no doubt, of legislative and administrative concessions which, ironically enough, will often bear harder than ever on the Hindu middle class from which the more explosive elements in the revolutionary forces are most likely to emanate.

Congress Presidentship

10. The election of Subhas Bose as President of the All India Congress is, of course, the major item of general political interest for the fortnight. Local patriotism probably explains, to some extent, the fact that the normally hostile group of Dr Bidhan Roy² decided at the last moment to support him.

11. Of the delegates who formed the electoral college to elect the President and the Provincial members of the All India Congress Committee—544 in number—over 80 are ex-detainees and 14 ex-State Prisoners; of this total of 544, 300 are probably supporters of Subhas Bose in the Provincial factions. The extent to which the terrorists and State Prisoners have complete control varies in different parts of the country, but it is interesting to note that in Dacca, of the 23 delegates, 11 had been detenus, State Prisoners or convicts and only three or four are not definitely associated with one or other of the two revolutionary parties.

12. Subhas Bose's public attitude, just before the election, is illustrated by remarks he made in a public speech, in Calcutta, on the occasion of the 'Independence Day' on the 26th of January, to the effect that Congress was virtually running a parallel government and very soon the British

administration in India would be replaced by Congress government: he added that the present international situation had weakened Britain's position and the time was most opportune to make a final bid for freedom; he exhorted the people to be ready for a fight at any moment. Time must, of course, show how far this is window-dressing, but it is impossible to ignore the fact that the President of the Congress claims to be elected on a policy which will fit in well with the Communist Party of India programme and who is also a person who, to say the least, has always kept on the right side of the violent revolutionary elements in Bengal.

It may be that he and his left-wing friends may succeed in discouraging premature violence—but if they do it will be from considerations of expediency and not from conviction, and the longer the outward manifestations are discouraged, the better the secret machinery will be organized....

¹ Michael Herbert Rudolf Knatchbull, 5th Baron Brabourne (1895–1939); dropped the Hugessen part of his surname in 1919; educated at Willington College, Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, served in the Royal Artillery; fought in the 1st World War; Conservative MP for Ashford, 1931; Private Secretary to Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, 1932–33; became Baron Brabourne; Governor of Bombay, 1931–37 and Governor of Bengal, 1937–39.

² Bidhan Chandra Roy (1882–1962); educated at Patna, Calcutta and London; elected to Bengal Legislative Council as an independent candidate in 1923; chosen as the deputy-leader of the Swaraj Party in the Council after the death of C.R. Das; elected as a member of the AICC in 1928; nominated to the Congress Working Committee in 1930; same year arrested and imprisoned; elected Mayor of Calcutta in 1931 and 1932, and president of the Bengal PCC in 1934; Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University from 1942 to 1944; after independence, elected as leader of the West Bengal Congress Legislative Party in 1948; continued to be the Chief Minister till his death in 1962.

26. S.C. Bose: 'The Man of the Hour'

Hitavada, 6 February 1939.

5 February 1939

Felicitations were offered to Mr Subhas Bose at a public meeting held at 'Tilakbhumi' today, under the presidentship of Thakur Laxman Singh Chouhan. The meeting was organized by the Congress 'Radicals' at which the following resolutions, proposed by Pandit B.P. Tiwari, PCC member and a left winger, were passed:

This meeting of the citizens of Jabalpur records its deep appreciation for the work and able guidance of Mr Subhas Bose during the last year, and congratulates him for his unprecedented success at the presidential election for the Tripuri session.

Characterizing this year's presidential election as a unique phenomenon in the history of the nation, the mover remarked that even since the acceptance of office there was a great setback to the revolutionary programme of the Congress and internal strength of this great organization was definitely on the decay. The speaker assured his audience that this victory of Mr Subhas Bose was a triumph of the forces of democracy and liberty in the country and asserted that the nation by voting its confidence in the radical policy of the 'Man of the Hour' had thrown a fitting challenge to the imperialistic British government. Mr N.P. Bilthare, supporting the resolution, suggested that the present presidential fight had nothing to do with the personal merits, issues, ideals and ideologies. He also emphasized that the nation by reelecting Mr Bose has expressed its uncompromising attitude towards the federation once again....



27. The UP Congress and the Presidential Election: Haig to Linlithgow, 8 February 1939

Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI.

[Extract]

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

I am grateful to you for three letters written on 23rd January, 2nd February and 4th February, dealing with my last two fortnightly reports and my general appreciation of the situation which I sent in December. I am very glad that you are broadly in agreement with the latter. We have had of course since I last wrote profoundly important and unexpected developments, and it must at present remain a matter of guess work what the results are likely to be. When I wrote last on February 24th, I mentioned certain factors which seemed to me to suggest that the right wing were pulling themselves together and were rather happier and more confident about their position. I think in fact this was the case, and I have since heard that they were quite reasonably satisfied with the result of the elections for the coming Congress session. The election however of Bose as President was to them a complete and shattering surprise. From such inquiries as I have been able to make, the election was in fact the result of a rather extra-ordinary conjunction of accidents combined with the fact that, as Pant himself has admitted to me, the right wing took things too much for granted and did not to sufficient canvassing. In this Province a large number of votes were turned over by the statement issued by Kidwai, the Revenue Minister, a copy of which I am enclosing, in which he openly attacked the Working Committee. It is probable that this statement was one of the important contributing causes of Bose's success, for the expected strength of the vote in the UP which was, as I have said, largely due to Kidwai's statement, helped Bose a long way to his victory. Kidwai has always been known as representing the left wing in the Cabinet, but he has hitherto been reported as giving loyal support to Pant. On his occasion, whatever may have been his intentions (and it is suggested that he had no idea his statement would have such an important effect) he was clearly asserting a position contrary to that of Pant, and he evidently acted without Pant's knowledge.

2. When I returned to Lucknow just after the Presidential election, Lucknow was humming with excitement and rumours. There was a general idea that the position of the Ministry had been greatly shaken, that Pant might have to resign shortly, and that Kidwai might take his place. Some support was given to these views by the fact that Pant was obviously worried and depressed, while Kidwai seemed to be in an unusually expansive mood. These anticipations however were I think premature. Pant and the Cabinet have settled down again to the difficult problems of policy and administration, and I do not think, short of an all-India crisis on the States issue, that they anticipate any change until after the Congress session.

3. No one has ever been able to do more than conjecture what may be at any time in the mind of Mahatma, and at this moment conjecture seems more than usually difficult. I got the impression however that he is seriously upset. I heard only yesterday from one of my Ministers that he had written to say that he would not be at the Congress Session. I do not quite know what interpretation is to be placed on this. It is generally assumed that the All India Congress Committee still has a definite right wing majority and that with its aid it would be possible to control the left wing. But it looks as if Gandhi's first idea at any rate was, while keeping his right wing forces in reserve, to let the left wing have plenty of rope and if possible hang themselves.

4. On the other hand the attitude of Nehru seems to me likely to be decisive. If he were to join Bose, the combination would be very powerful. Most people assume that he is so closely attached to Gandhi that he would not go against him. But his recent utterances have been very extreme.

I enclose, for instance, a statement which he issued on January 26th—Independence Day—and also a statement that has appeared in today's papers, which reads almost like an immediate call to arms. I have some suspicion that Nehru regards a European war as inevitable, and that immediately on its outbreak he contemplates launching a revolutionary movement in India. If war did not come, he might be disposed to hold his hand longer.

5. In the meantime Gandhi's attitude about the States is decidedly menacing, and Nehru, as you will see from his statement of today, takes up this issue with enthusiasm. I think the present attitude of my Ministers is that they can see no kind of direct interest of the United Provinces in this movement about States subjects, and that they can hardly believe that they would be called upon to plunge the Province into confusion on such an issue. But I very much doubt whether they really know any more than we do what is going on in the mind of the Mahatma.

6. I think my Ministers are certainly uneasy as to what may happen after the Congress session and as to the action that might be taken by a left wing Working Committee. The three possibilities are—

- (a) that they would call upon the Ministry to follow a more advanced policy, but would not seek to displace Pant;
- (b) that they would consider it necessary to have a definitely left wing Ministry, in which case Pant would have to go;
- (c) that they would embark immediately on a revolutionary movement and make the Provincial Ministries resign. Short of a European war, I should be disposed to think that they would not proceed immediately to (c), but policy (b) might be found to lead on fairly rapidly to this position. This is all on the assumption that the left wing secure a free hand as a result of the Congress session. If that is not so, and it is perhaps not likely, naturally the changes of a more moderate policy are increased, and I should regard it as probable that Pant would remain in office.

7. A further complication in our Provincial situation is that Nehru has just been elected as President of the Provincial Congress Committee; in other words, he is in a position to dictate policy and pace to the Ministry. I think, judging from his past behaviour, that he might be reasonable so long as he does not judge that the time for a break has come. But even so, I fear the Ministry will find themselves being urged to go faster and farther than they really consider wise.

8. The problem which has been causing my Ministers a great deal of difficulty lately is the budget. I have already in separate correspondence given Your Excellency the main outlines of the position and the proposals of the Ministry for dealing with it. At our last Cabinet meeting on February 6th they had accepted my proposal to include 30 lakhs receipts from the sugarcane case, and by making various other adjustments reduced the revenue deficit to about 47 lakhs. They decided also to impose a 2 annas tax on the sale of petrol, which is estimated to bring in nearly 8 lakhs. This leaves a revenue deficit of about 40 lakhs. This they intended to cover by the tax on employment which I have reported separately. At our meeting on February 6th I stressed the legal point strongly with the aid of the information given in your telegram, and I think they were a good deal shaken. Pant himself in fact has not I think any belief in it as a practical measure. Katju, however, who is said to be the author of the bright idea and who has I fear a somewhat vindictive outlook towards the higher paid services in general, is engaged in looking up Privy Council rulings and Dominion cases, and if he can work out a plausible case (he seldom in matters like this aims at anything higher than plausibility) I think he will press the Cabinet to continue. If so, I shall open up with arguments on the merits, which at the Cabinet meeting on the 6th I kept in reserve. I tried to create the impression that really they could not depend on this source of revenue, and at the end put to Pant the plain alternatives of reducing their expenditure, seeking for another source of

taxation, or leaving the deficit uncovered. He said that in view of their policy it was impossible to reduce their expenditure, agreed that it was going to be exceedingly difficult to find any other source of taxation, but revolted against leaving the deficit uncovered, for he has a strong financial conscience. Nevertheless, it seems to me at the moment most likely that that is what will happen....

28. The Presidential Election: North-West Frontier Province Governor's Report, 9 February 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2210, NAI.

... The voting in this Province (NWFP) in the presidential election was—Dr Sitaramayya 22 votes and Subhas Chandra Bose 13 votes. Dr Khan Sahib resents the re-election of Mr Bose strongly, and he attributes the results to the failure of the Working Committee to secure any publicity about the Madras candidate; a number of voters in this Province did not even know his name. The Chief Minister distrusts Mr Bose, probably because he considers him to be communally-minded, unbalanced and likely to interfere in provincial administration. He anticipates a serious division among the Congress leaders, unless Mr Bose is prepared to meet the wishes of the moderates and, in the event of such a division, Dr Khan Sahib would undoubtedly join the moderate party. Locally, the result of the election is likely to create some disagreement in the Congress ranks as Ghulam Mohammad Khan, the late President of the Provincial Committee, led the party in favour of Mr Bose. Both Muslim Leaguers and the Hindus are therefore elated at Mr Bose's success. It is interesting that Abul Kalam Azad has just come to Pashawar at short notice, presumably to consolidate the Congress right-wing.

29. On Nationalist Struggle in Punjab: Mrs L.K. Rallia Ram to Jawaharlal Nehru, 11 February 1939

AICC Papers, File No. G-31, 1939, NMML.

*Goulding Road
Lahore*

Dear Comrade Jawaharlalji,

Thanks for your letter dated 5th. I am extremely sorry that you are not able to come to Lahore at this time when the time for march is approaching. The President of the National Congress has also given notice of six months to the British Government to concede to Indian demands. So the time to prepare for the grim struggle ahead is very short. Congress Provinces are well equipped to face the fight, but what about those where reactionary governments still hold control? I compare them to a sick man who needs to physician. Punjab is the head of the body-politic of the land, for which reason the energies of the All-India leaders should be focused here. Its' past history is still fresh in our minds. The flag of independence was first unfurled in the Punjab. Then why is it that Punjab is left out of the scheme of all India Organization? Communal leaders have full sway over the masses, for very little counter propaganda is done. There are no offices for Muslim train mass Contact movements that should be doing the spade-work for the general mobilization of the masses. Lahore is soon going to be a corporation. If sufficient propaganda is not done immediately, the reactionaries and communal bodies will again capture all the seats, which will give a setback to the Congress movement. You should lay down a definite line of action for the whole Province. The Mass Contact movement should be supplied in the definite statistics for propaganda work.

For instance if there could be prepared charts of the total income of the land and of the grand scale exploitation and expenditure on the top-heavy machinery, the military budgets, the civil services, the home-charges and the little amount left for nation-building activities, if these simple truths are disseminated through the mass contact agencies, no power on earth can prevent the masses from joining the Congress fold. The Congress has the gospel of truth which no government can prevent from spreading. No trickery, statesmanship or diplomacy is required to place it before the masses. The facts are there and only need propaganda by selfless workers with courage, vitality and vision. Organization, what matters most, is needed. Therefore, I am again emphasizing the need of an All-India leader like to come and lay down a clear and precise policy which should be the basis of future action. Any delay would mean the weakening of Congress forces.

Why is it that all-India leaders want to avoid the Punjab and give so much attention to other Provinces. Mahatmaji and M. Abul Kalam Azad Sahib passed through the Punjab without breaking their journey here, although the public requested them to stop for a while.¹ In my opinion Punjab needs the most attention and I do hope the case of the Punjab will be considered at the Tripuri Session ways and means would be devised to take away the power from the reactionaries & other communal organization, that are thriving well, because there is no definite propaganda carried on definite lines.

Sincerely yours,

¹ Nehru's reply on 25 February 1939 was: 'I have your letter. I fear it is not possible for me to visit the Punjab at this stage. I think you are wrong in imagining that the Punjab has been neglected by the Congress leaders. The Punjab has taken more time of the various leaders than any province excepting perhaps Bengal. It is not the visits of leaders that remove the difficulties. They of course help. The trouble lies deeper and it is for the people themselves to pull themselves together.'

30. Muslim Women's Marriage Dissolution Bill

Indian Social Reformer, 11 February 1939, pp. 378-79.

The Report of the select committee on the Muslim Women's Marriage Dissolution Bill was submitted to the Central Legislative Assembly.

Among the changes made by the committee, Class II of the amended bill replaces Clauses 2, 3 and 4 of the bill referred to the committee. The opening words apply the clause to any woman married under Muslim law, even though she may not herself profess Islam. The references to the various schools of law have been omitted and the grounds made general in the belief that they will prove acceptable to all. The grounds set out in the bill referred to the committee have been thoroughly overhauled and recast in the interests of greater precision, and certain contingent provisions have been added by way of provisos.

Notes have been appended by Dr G.V. Deshmukh, Mr Asaf Ali and Bhai Parmanand.

Mr Asaf Ali, in his note, expresses satisfaction at the form in which the bill has been amended and supports the bill as it has emerged from the select committee. His main objection was that, although a Muslim woman's conversion to another faith shall by itself operate as an automatic dissolution of marriage. This objection has been met with in the amended bill as it has emerged from the select committee.

Dr G.V. Deshmukh, in his note, congratulates the Muslim members of the select committee on bringing forward 'a liberal and just piece of legislation' and supports the bill as it has emerged from the select committee.

Bhai Parmanand, in his note of dissent, says:

‘In my opinion Clause 4 of the bill, which in a modified form is the original Clause 5, is altogether redundant and no longer required. It cannot be denied that the renunciation of Islam by a married Muslim women and her conversion to a faith other than Islam was so far the only legal remedy left to her to get a dissolution of marriage. This remedy has been sanctified by long usage and accepted by the various High Courts of India....

‘I think, however, that Muslim legislators are perfectly entitled to reform and make a change in their religious rites and customs, but they should clearly assert it and have substantial grounds for such a change and at the same time they should not upset the old foundations altogether. My view therefore, is that while abolishing apostasy as the only cause of dissolution of marriage, they should at least put apostasy as one of the main grounds of getting divorce along with the 19 fresh grounds as given in Clause II.

‘I wish to add one more point. During the debates on the bill it was urged that the renunciation of Islam was in most cases not genuine and that it was only a device adopted by Muslim women to get rid of undesirable husbands, and that therefore the object of the original clause 5 was to put an end to this evil practice. Accepting this view to be correct, it gives us a sufficient ground to believe that genuine abjuration of Islam cannot but be followed by the dissolution of marriage and this, I think, is a very substantial reason for either omitting Clause 4 from the bill altogether or at least putting apostasy as the main ground for getting divorce.’

31. The Gandhi–Bose Meeting

Editorial, *Tribune*, 15 February 1939.

5 February 1939

The eyes of all Congressmen and Congresswomen, in fact, of all Congress-minded men and women are at this moment turned towards Wardha, where an important meeting between Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress President is about to take place. No meeting of this kind, as far as we remember, ever took place in the past. Some of us may regret, for one reason or another, the circumstances under which this meeting has become necessary, but all will agree that those circumstances has arisen, the best interests of both the Congress and the country imperatively required that the meeting should take place at the earliest possible moment. It was his recognition of this fact that made Mr Bose, in spite of his ill-health and in disregard of medical advice, decided to proceed to Wardha the moment he was free to do so.

Regarding the outcome of the meeting we entertain no doubt whatever. The Mahatma is as firm a believer in concerted action or as it is sometimes called, a United Front on the part of all Congressmen and Congresswomen as any man in the country. The present differences between the so-called Rightists and the so-called Leftists are by no means more serious than the differences between the no-changers and the pro-changers of a former day, and yet it was the Mahatma more than any other single individual whose wise counsels and sagacious guidance kept those two groups together until they succeeded in evolving a common programme and policy. We make no doubt that the same will be the case in the present instance. The Mahatma may himself choose to remain outside the Congress, because, in his own words, he must always be of the Congress whether he is in it or not but there is not another man in the country who is exactly in the same position as the Mahatma in this respect. That is why the Mahatma when he went out of the Congress declared that he would not like any one else to follow his example. For the vast majority of Congressmen to cease to be in the Congress or even to cease to take an active share in its affairs

would be the same thing as ceasing to be of it. For all practical purposes they would be lost to the Congress and if the number included a sufficient number of leading Congressmen the loss to the Congress and the country would be simply incalculable. It would make the Congress distinctly weaker at a time when the best interests of the Congress imperatively require that it should be made even stronger than it is by the inclusion in its membership of those patriotic and freedom-loving Indians who for one reason or another are not now in it. Whatever the Mahatma may have said on the morrow of the presidential election when the disappointment caused by the defeat of his nominee, which he wrongly took to be his own defeat, was fresh, we have no doubt in our mind that he cannot for a moment countenance any measure or policy of which this is bound to be the outcome, and that when the time for action comes he will, as in the past, throw himself wholeheartedly into the maintenance of that strength and solidarity of the Congress of which he has been the supreme creator. Mr Bose has, we venture to think, only to tell the Mahatma explicitly what he has in effect been saying all these days that he has no intention of suggesting to the Congress any radical change in its policy or programme and that the fundamental principles and policy which the Congress has been following ever since the Mahatma's advent will be as scrupulously adhered to during the coming year as they have been in the year that is about to close, for the Mahatma to exercise his tremendous influence and authority to prevent anything even remotely approaching a division in the Congress, to say nothing of a split or schism.

Nor will it be difficult for the Mahatma to do so. Not only are the Rightist members of the Working Committee all or mostly the Mahatma's direct disciples and lieutenants to whom his very word is a command, but it is clear from the statement just made by Babu Rajendra Prasad that it is not the case that they or any of them have actually had formally resigned from the Committee. All that they have done is to offer to resign, and that, too, only 'to give the President a completely free hand in carrying out his programme.' If Mr Bose will now tell them, as he has in fact told them, that he desires no such free hand and that he has no programme which is radically at variance with what the Congress had followed hitherto, it is obvious that the question of their resigning office will not arise at all, and that they will continue to cooperate with him actively as they have done hitherto. For these reasons we confidently believe that the end of the anxious days through which the Congress has been passing is in sight, and that before many hours are over the country will learn authoritatively from a statement issued either by the President or the Mahatma that the dark clouds that have been hovering over India's political sky ever since the presidential election have passed away. God grant that out of the ordeal of fire through which the Congress has been passing it will emerge an even stronger and more united body than it has been hitherto so that it may march uninterruptedly from strength to strength and victory to victory until it has reached its destined goal.

32.(a) On the Gandhi-Bose Meeting: Pyarelal to G.D. Birla,
20 February 1939

G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1977, p. 251.

Segaon
Wardha (CP)
February 20, 1939

Dear Ghanshyamdasji,

After such a long time, I am today able to sit down to write to you at peace.

You are right about Bapu. I am hoping that he will not fail to do needful in regard to his health, which after all he looks after as a spiritual burden. Only he does not believe in 'health at any price' or for the matter of that on 'life at all cost', I can never forget a line which a friend sent to him as a Christmas souvenir two years ago. It was 'The candle in giving forth light consumeth itself.' It is the fate of all God's messengers to 'consume themselves' to till dark world with His radiance.

Subhas was here, closeted with Bapu for three hours. The report that has appeared in the Press is substantially correct. As I wrote to you before, Bapu's outspoken advice fell absolutely flat upon him. He is out for a personal adventure. I wonder where the crew on whose shoulders he has mounted to this Presidential chair will land him. It is dangerous crew. But Bapu hopes that if he can rightly put into operation the whole technique of non-violence, it will be well with the Congress and the country.

In the mean time an intriguing is likely to arise in the next AICC meeting which it is learnt is by majority likely to vote for sanity. Confabulations here are still proceeding. You will know everything in a day or two. Bapu will most likely issue a statement to the Press.

As in the case of Jaipur, in Rajkot too there are likely to be some interesting and unexpected entrants into the tests soon. But I must name no names. It will be for Bapu to have more distinguished company.

Yours sincerely,
Pyarelal

(b) On the Gandhi-Bose Meeting: Pyarelal to G.D. Birla,
22 February 1939

G.D. Birla, *Bapu, A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1977, pp. 252-53.

Segaon
Wardha (CP)
February 22, 1939

Dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I find that an assiduous attempt is being made in a certain section of the Press to create an impression that there was some sort of 'understanding' or 'compromise' arrived at between Bapu and Subhas Bose as to the future programme of the Congress. If this implies any manner of acquiescence or agreement on the part of Bapu as to the policies that Bose is professing to advocate, it is altogether erroneous and misleading. Bapu made it absolutely clear to Bose that he could not expect any kind of cooperation in his new policies from the members of the old cabinet. But Bapu may not issue a statement to counteract this propaganda at the present juncture, as it is likely to be misunderstood and exploited by interested parties.

In response to a wire from Bose and Dr Sunil, Bapu has decided to postpone the final taking of a decision on the main issue in the present meeting of the WC Members may, however, address him a letter to say that they are ready with their resignation as soon as he is ready to accept them. In the mean time Bapu's mind is more and more being exercised over the situation in Limbdi and Rajkot. In the latter place torture of satyagrahis under arrest has led to a big hunger strike on the part of a large number of satyagrahi prisoners, including several trusted old workers and colleagues. This is serious matter from Bapu's point of view—knowing as we do how such experience on the part of those whom he has tried through and in whose integrity and ahimsa he has perfect faith

pains him. He has already wired to the first member to stay his hand and to tell him with what difficulty he is restraining himself from plunging in.

Today at noon, after his sleep, his b.p. unaccountably gave an abnormal reading 186/114-16. It suspects some latent cause for temporary excitement which we do not know.

I expect the disturbance to be temporary and for the present am not worried over it.

Yours sincerely,
Pyarelal

PS
With regard to your coming to Wardha, Bapu through an oversight failed to say anything. I shall ask him again on the first opportunity, but I may tell you this much straight away that, so far as Bapu's state of health is concerned, it need not deter you at all. If you do not come in hurry with the intention of returning in still greater hurry, your visit instead of adding to the tension may have a relaxing effect.

P.L.

33. Punjab Congress on Working Committee Resignations

Tribune, 24 February 1939.

Lahore
23 February 1939

The resignation of Sardar Patel and others from the membership of the Working Committee has been received as a great disappointment in Punjab Congress circle.

Diwan Chaman Lal,¹ Deputy Leader of the Congress Party, in the course of an interview with a representative of this paper said. Any situation which, he felt, has rendered it necessary for practically the entire Working Committee to resign in a political disaster of the first magnitude. The Working Committee as constituted was the rock shelter for millions of Mahatma Gandhi's followers. 'That rock shelter,' he said, 'is no longer there at a time when the typhoon of political events gathers strength and comes perceptibly near. An army cannot be led to success without its tried and trusted general. And yet the Working Committee was right in tendering its resignations in view of the issues that were raised in my opinion quite unnecessarily.'

Continuing Diwan Chaman Lal thought that there seemed no alternative for the Working Committee but to give the President a free hand.

Continuing, he said:

'It is inconceivable that without Mahatma Gandhi's active lead and the active cooperation of his colleagues any mass movement is likely to succeed in India. Like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, I am a confirmed Socialist. But much as I have desired to hurry the pace during the past nearly twenty years I have always felt that I would be doing Socialism an ill-service by helping to drive a wedge in our ranks on ideological grounds in the circumstances of our subjection.'

S. Sampuran Singh, when interviewed by a *Tribune* correspondent said: 'I may be unaware of the reasons for which the members of the Working Committee of the Congress have resigned. Naturally they must be very weighty ones but I cannot help saying that we should all do our best to push the work for which we stand. There may be differences and perhaps very sharp ones, but this is not the time to withdraw cooperation. I feel it is the duty of all of us to submit to the decision of the country and do our best to carry out the great mission of the Congress.'

‘It would have been far better if Sardar Patel and his “rightist” friends had remained in the Working Committee and guided Mr Bose and if he went too fast their modernizing influence under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi would have been most useful for the country.’

Dr Sheikh Mohd. Alam, MLA said: ‘No one who has any love for the country can feel unconcerned on the resignations recently offered by members of the Working Committee and particularly in face of the statement issued by Pt Jawaharlal Nehru. The crisis has come and no one expected it so early. It is unfortunate that this crisis has taken place at a time when the Motherland was in need of joint effort of all the leaders in the country to work for her emancipation. Whilst the question of Federation is facing the country dangerously, the split in the Working Committee of the Congress is most unfortunate.’

‘With all this, I consider, we should be loyal to the Congress and work up the programme which would be chalked out at the next session at Tripuri. One finds consolation in the statement of Mahatma Gandhi that the retiring leaders would help in working the programme if they are in agreement with it and at any rate they will not obstruct it.’

The resignation of Pt Jawaharlal Nehru was a great surprise for the Socialist circles in the Punjab. They had expected that the mediation of Pt Nehru would bridge the gulf.

Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava, the leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, preferred to remain ‘dumb’, as expression of opinion on this matter, he thought, was inconsistent with his position.

¹ Diwan Chamanlal (b. 1892); educated at Gordon Mission College, Rawalpindi, Middle Temple and Oxford; founder member, All India Trade Union Congress; member of the Punjab legislative council (1923–30); member Royal Commission on Labour 1928–31; represented India in the International Labour Conference at Geneva in 1928, 1932, and 1946; member, Constituent Assembly 1946–48; Ambassador of India in Turkey, 1948–49; member of the Rajya Sabha (1952–67).

34. The Resignations

Tribune, 24 February 1939.

24 February 1939

It is done. The twelve Rightist members of the Congress Working Committee have now formally tendered their resignation. They have not even been able to wait for this purpose till Mr Bose’s recovery and the next meeting of the Working Committee ...

It has evidently not occurred to the distinguished authors of the letter that the action taken by them belies their word, that the tendering of their resignation at the present time, when they know nothing about the policy and programme which the President will place before the country, is utterly inconsistent with their professed intention of giving all possible cooperation to the President in matters where they see eye to eye with him. Suppose for a moment that the policy and programme of Mr Bose is in all essentials the pure milk of the Gandhiite word, what will they do? Will not ‘all possible cooperation’ in that case necessarily mean and include cooperation from inside the cabinet? On what possible ground will they then be able to refuse to serve on the Working Committee if they are called upon by the President, backed by the general body of members of the AICC and of the Congress itself, to do so? Mahatmaji himself, according to a United Press message is of opinion that ‘the leaders who have resigned should wait and see what policy is enunciated by Mr Bose at Tripuri, and that if they find themselves in agreement with the new policy, well and good.’ With due respect to Mahatmaji we venture to point out that the admirable principle he has laid down applies just as much to the present situation as to the situation that will arise if the

members find themselves in agreement, with Mr Bose's policy and programme at the Tripuri Congress. If it is necessary and desirable for them, after resigning their seats on the Working Committee, to wait and see what policy Mr Bose enunciates at Tripuri, it was equally necessary and desirable for them to wait for this enunciation of the President's policy before submitting their resignation, for the question of resignation, could and ought to arise only in the event of there being a serious disagreement in respect of principles or policy between the President and themselves.

On this question of policy itself there seems to be a strange misapprehension in the minds of both the resigning leaders and Mahatma Gandhi. 'We feel,' say the former, 'that you should be left entirely free to choose a cabinet that represents your views. We feel that the time has come when the country should have a clear-cut policy, not based on a compromise between different, incompatible groups in the Congress. It is but right that you should select a homogeneous cabinet representing the views of the majority.' The conclusion is based on two assumptions both of which are fallacious. One is that the presidential election was fought over the question of principles and policy and that in voting for Mr Bose the majority voted for a particular programme and policy as distinguished from another. This is admittedly and demonstrably untrue. No clear-cut policy or programme was placed before the electors either by Mr Bose himself or by the other candidate, and it is matter of common knowledge that all the Rightist leaders are under any delusion in this matter. Mr Bose himself stated only a few days before the election that the Rightists were in a majority in the present Congress and the composition of the AICC for the coming year is a conclusive proof that in this respect the next Congress will not differ materially from the present. The second assumption, which is equally unwarranted, is that Mr Bose's own programme and policy is not only substantially different from but incompatible with that of the Rightists. Not only has Mr Bose so far not said or done anything to indicate that he has any such programme, but he has made it abundantly clear that as regards the one concrete issue on which he had laid the greatest stress, the question of Federation, he wants nothing more than that the Haripura resolution, which represented as much the view of the Rightists as of the Leftists, be fully given effect to. He has also stated in the plainest language that he has no intention of asking the Congress to adopt a purely Leftist programme or policy.

Similarly the Mahatma is reported to be of the opinion that even if the resigning members of the Working Committee do not find themselves in agreement with Mr Bose they should allow him to experiment with his programme and that nothing should be done which may be construed as putting obstruction in his way. Need we say that we entirely differ from this view? If the resigning members consider that Mr Bose is placing before the Congress a policy or programme which is detrimental to the best interests of the country, why should they allow him to go on with it, if and so far as it is in their power to prevent him from doing so by democratic means. Mr Bose may not be 'an enemy of the country,' as the Mahatma said not very gracefully sometime ago, but if he advocates a policy and programme which the Rightists consider to be harmful or dangerous to the country, then they owe it as much to their country as to themselves to oppose it with all the constitutional weapons at their disposal. It is not by opposing it, but by not opposing it, that they would be playing the part of 'obstructionists,' for the true obstructionist is he who obstructs not the will of an individual or a party, but the progress and freedom of the country, and there could be no surer way of obstructing the freedom and progress of the country than for those who are convinced that a certain policy or programme is dangerous not to oppose it with all their might. The fact is that both the resigning members of the Working Committee and the Mahatma have after the presidential election proceeded from one extreme view to another. Before the election their opinion was that the president was only a glorified figurehead, the mere chairman of the Working Committee and the AICC, whose principal business was to carry out the policy of those

bodies. After the election their position seems to be that the President is a virtual dictator who should be left completely free to carry out his policy and programme. We need hardly say that the truth, here as elsewhere, lies between the two extremes. The President is neither a figurehead nor a dictator, but the chosen leader of the Congress for the year, who is necessarily free to choose his cabinet and in cooperation with it to initiate policies and programme, but whose policies and programmes must be accepted by the Congress and the AICC before they can be carried out. To say as some Rightists have been doing that they will not oppose the President and his supporters even if they are in a majority in the Congress or the AICC is to talk unconstitutional nonsense. If the President finds himself in a minority he must either submit to the majority or resign his office. On another point too, we emphatically differ from the view of both the resigning members and the Mahatma. If the Congress is to be a United Front, its policy and programme must represent the largest measure of agreement among all the principal groups, and not a clear-cut party programme and policy. For the Congress to adopt such a programme or policy at the present time would be to make an end of its character as a United Front.

35. On Nehru's Statement

'Jawaharlal's Statement', *Independent India*, 26 February 1939.

26 February 1939

The crisis in the Congress has become an accomplished fact with the announcement of their resignations by twelve out of fifteen members of the Working Committee. These resignations did not come as a surprise to Congressmen in general for they were in the air for over a fortnight last. What would surprise the country and the Congress is the fact that the twelve Right wingers have been joined in their non-cooperation with the elected president of the Congress by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. 'Not being associated with any particular group' and being 'an individual in this great organization' Pandit Jawaharlal has thought fit to issue a long separate statement explaining the reasons that led him to resign from the Working Committee and to declare that he could not be of any help to the Congress President even in his individual capacity. We have read Panditji's statement with the care and attention that it deserves. We read and re-read it to find out cogent arguments to justify his action but found nothing but vague statements and vaguer charges.

Panditji's first argument is that he was opposed to Subhas Babu's re-election as he knew 'the consequences that would follow from it'. But he never stops to consider why those consequences should follow and whether the following of those consequences was legitimate and justified. Democratic functioning of any organization will become impossible if things, right in themselves, are not to be done only because a sanction disapproves of them. We can understand Pandit Jawaharlal's action if he himself were against the re-election of Subhas Babu. But then he ought to have told Congressmen why Dr Pattabhi was to be preferred to Subhas Babu. He did not choose to do so before the election, nor does he do so in the present statement. He assures the country that those 'various reasons' had 'nothing to do with Right or Left' and regards the use of the words 'Left' and 'Right' as vague and unjustified. Here Panditji is directly contradicted by the twelve other illustrious members of the Working Committee. In their letter of resignation they say: 'We feel that the time has come when the country should have a clear-cut policy not based on compromise between different incompatible groups of the Congress.' We are concerned not with the merit of the suggestion but with the admission that there are in the Congress different 'incompatible groups'. The country has learnt to designate those groups by the terms left and right and it is Pandit Jawaharlal who taught the country to do so. It is too late in the day now for

Panditji to turn round and say that no such groups exist and make a grievance against Subhas Babu for the use of those terms.

Panditji's complaint against Subhas Babu appears to be two-fold, that he made certain unjustified and untrue allegations against some members of the Working Committee and that he did not define exactly in writing the policy he advocated both in national and international affairs. Regarding the latter Panditji seems to have overlooked the fact emphasized by Subhas Babu that he was advocating no new policy. His demand and his completed plan of action was only for a more energetic and loyal implementing of the Congress resolution. And in the formulation of that plan of action the country looked up to Pandit Jawaharlal's active cooperation with Subhas Babu.

Regarding the allegations it is well worth remembering that Subhas Babu was not the first to make those allegations. If Panditji takes the trouble of going through his speeches and statements of the last three years he will find that if giving expression to such suspicions is an offence he is not less guilty of that offence than Subhas Babu. Besides, Subhas Babu had merely given expression to a general belief widely current in the country and had not expressed it as his own opinion. The existence of that belief, whether right or wrong, cannot be denied. It can be dispelled only by the positive acts of the persons to whom it applies and not by any withdrawal of the statement with or without apology by Subhas Babu.

Another charge that Panditji has indirectly levelled against Subhas Babu is that 'in the very heart of our organization new methods are being introduced' and that local Congress disputes are being dealt with 'not in the usual routine way but directly from the top'. This is an extremely vague charge on which the country cannot form any opinion unless Panditji chooses to place before it the relevant material. But we may be permitted to remark that, if true, it may be a good ground against Subhas Babu's re-election but is a flimsy pretext for refusing him cooperation after his re-election.

Pandit Jawaharlal as talked of his having found himself in disagreement with Subhas Babu on some important matters.... We wonder why he cannot speak in more definite terms. He complains, 'We have had enough of vague phrases and hackneyed words.' We echo his words; but take the liberty of pointing out that his speeches and statements are not exempt from the malady. His present statement in particular is so full of 'vague phrases and hackneyed words' that it gives the country no insight of his mind and no cogent reasons for the disastrous step that he has taken.

36. On Jawaharlal Nehru's Resignation

'Jawaharlal's Action', *Independent India*, 26 February 1939.

26 February 1939

[Extract]

Pandit Jawaharlal's action is extremely deplorable. He has left Subhas Babu and the left-wingers in the lurch. Since the Lucknow Congress he was the unquestioned leader and the spokesman of the left-wing in the Congress. To him goes the credit of giving a new leftward orientation to the Congress, of popularizing the leftwing policies in the country. In spite of his close associations with Gandhiji and the right-wing leaders of the Congress and the consequent occasional deviations during the last three years, he was in general with the left-wing and always pulled the weight of his unique position in favour of radicalizing and democratizing the Congress. In view of this it was confidently expected that in this crisis also he would stand with the leftists—the national revolutionary forces in the Congress—and help then to evolve the new alternative leadership which must on day or the other arise in the Congress. Unfortunately he has chosen to do otherwise.

Whatever may be the reasons which prompted him to do so, the objective result of his action is that the left-wing is weakened and right-wing is immeasurably strengthened. He has failed the left-wing in its hour of trial. We have no doubt that the left-wing will survive even this crushing blow and will emerge victorious if not today, a little later....

37. On the Gandhi–Bose ‘struggle’: Linlithgow to John Hubback, 26 February 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2216, NAI.

... Many thanks for your appreciation of the reactions of the Bose-Gandhi struggle on the position of the local Ministry. All the evidence that I have had arose to show that, despite the fact that Bose has become President, Gandhi and the members of the old Working Committee are in pretty effective control of the situation, and have no intention of allowing themselves to be pushed aside. I need not emphasize the interest of the outcome of this internal dispute. It cannot I feel on the one hand but tend, whatever its outcome, to accentuate the cleavage between the two wings; secondly, if as I should at this stage be rather disposed to anticipate, victory remains with the Right Wing, it means I fear that the early prospect of any relaxation of central control over, and directions of, Provincial Ministries is substantially reduced....¹

¹ The Viceroy's assessment, as communicated to Haig on 2 March was: 'As regards the second main question—the Tripuri Conference, here too it is at the moment a little difficult to judge how things will go. My own estimate, for what it is worth, would be that the Mahatma and the members of the old Working Committee are most unlikely to lose the battle. How much face saving from the point of view of Bose may be involved (that is, unless Bose is prepared to stand up and fight) one cannot judge. But I cannot help feeling that it is significant that Bose should have gone so far as formally to accept the resignations of the members of the former Working Committee, and that he should have announced his intention of rising from his bed of sickness to face the odds at Tripuri. If he does, and if he insists on the election of a new Working Committee antagonistic to the old, and if no face saving compromise can be arrived at, it is difficult to feel that the reactions on the position of Congress in the country as a whole and on the position at any rate of certain Congress Governments can be other than important. And in any case, developments of this character cannot, one would think, fail to widen and emphasize the cleavage between the left and right wings. You know how grateful I shall be for any information you can continue to give me as to the reactions of your Ministers.'

38. Resolution Regarding Appointment of a Committee for Undertaking Legislation in Regard to Hindu Marriages

Central Legislative Council Debates, Vol. I, 23 January–18 April 1939, pp. 388–409 of 27 February 1939.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú (United Provinces Southern: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, the Resolution that I have the honour to commend to the acceptance of the House runs as follows:

‘That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to appoint a Committee to inquire into and report on the question of the desirability of legislation which would make Hindu marriages performed according to religious rites (a) strictly monogamous, such marriages also being registrable at the option of the parties and (b) where they have been registered, dissoluble by courts of law under proper and adequate safeguards.’

Sir, the Resolution that I am moving is, as I shall show, a moderate one from the point of view of one who believes that vast changes are necessary in the present constitution of Hindu society. I am not asking the House to commit itself to anything except a committee to consider a question of considerable social importance. I am not asking the House at this stage to commit itself to the

principle of monogamy and registration of divorce. As the House is no doubt aware, several Bills are pending in regard to these matters before this House and the other place and coordinated effort is necessary with regard to these measures. We need a committee to coordinate the efforts of these various pieces of legislation. I am asking the House to take into consideration the change that has taken place in thought in Hindu society in these basic matters and I recommend to the Governor General in Council in this Resolution the appointment of a committee to consider the question of monogamy and divorce. This, surely, Sir, is not a revolutionary proposal. I would like the Government to inquire through the method of a committee whether Hindu society is ripe for the change which has been suggested in my Resolution. That will be the object of this committee. It is therefore as modest a proposal as any could be.

Perhaps, Sir, you will allow me to explain my Resolution. In the first part of my Resolution I recommend that Hindu marriages should be made strictly monogamous. Hindu marriage is in fact in the vast majority of cases monogamous. Our religious teaching is in favour of monogamy; the highest ideal of a Hindu marriage is a monogamous union. The ideal union for Hindus is represented by Ram and Sita and it was a monogamous union. I do not, Sir, propose to argue the case for monogamy. We cannot have a double sex standard for men and women. Polygamy and harem degrade women and shock the modern conscience. The institution of polygamy lowers the status of Indian civilization and enables our foreign critics to point the finger of scorn at us. The vast majority of our men, as I say, practise monogamy. Public opinion is strongly in favour of monogamous unions and one rarely comes across a Hindu who has more than one wife. (An Honourable Member: 'Not rarely'.) Well, I mean except in the upper aristocracy or princely order, monogamy is the rule. I hardly know an upper middle class or a lower middle class or a working class man who has more than one wife. (An Honourable Member: 'Then your experience is very limited'.) I have no experience of the Madras Presidency but I have experience of the United Provinces and monogamy is the rule in the United Provinces and not the exception. Why then should the law not recognize an existing fact? Women's organizations are strongly monogamous. Sir, last, I was in Australia and a gentleman asked me in the most delightful manner imaginable—I do not blame him, he asked it so innocently—he asked me whether the lady who was my wife was the only wife I had, and he subsequently explained to me that he had put that question because he had come across an Indian nobleman with three wives on the continent. Now, Sir, this sort of thing lowers the status of India in the eyes of the civilized world. One result of the present position is that the Indian marriage is not recognized in England. Hindu law does not recognize the English marriage. The results are disastrous. There have unfortunately been, as a result of this state of the law, cases which have not exactly enhanced India's reputation in the outside world. In the Dominions too, the Indian marriage is not recognized and the Dominions get an excuse for refusing to recognize our union as our union is not strictly according to law a monogamous one. In my view, therefore, a change in the law is essential. The vast majority of the people, Sir, marry in the religious form and therefore the religious marriage should be made monogamous. I know, Sir, that there is this Special Marriage Act and I shall have something to say about it, but the vast majority of our people marry in the religious form and therefore the religious marriage should be made monogamous. It is not enough therefore to say that there is provision for civil marriage. My Resolution, therefore, suggests that when a religious marriage has been registered it should be dissoluble.

The Honourable The President: Will you please explain to me that part of your Resolution, which I do not understand. Registrable where?

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: I am coming to that, Sir.

Now, Sir, I will explain my Resolution if I may. In the first part, I say that all marriages should be monogamous. In the second part, I do not say that all marriages should be compulsorily registrable. Personally I favour compulsory registration but having regard to the vast illiteracy that prevails in this country there may be administrative difficulty in registering all marriages. I have therefore suggested a half-way house. I have therefore suggested optional registration.

The Honourable The President: I must to know the machinery by which registration will be effect.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: Well, Sir, there are the municipalities, the district boards, the patwaris, all this machinery can be used for the purpose of registration. The subordinate judiciary ...

The Honourable The President: And the village people are supposed to go there and get their marriages registered?

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: Well, Sir, the machinery can be revised, and in fact all marriages are not to be registrable under my Resolution. It is optional. It is optional for people who undergo their religious marriage to have their marriages registered or not. It will be said, Sir, that there is a Special Marriage Act and those who wish to have registered marriages can register it under the Act. But the Act, Sir, imposes disabilities upon those who marry under it. Sir, a marriage under the Special Marriage Act has the effect of dissolving the joint family. It severs the connection of the man marrying under the Special Marriage Act from the joint family. The first criticism, therefore, I have against the Special Marriage Act is: Why should dissolution follow automatically? A Hindu co-parcener has the right of partition and if a Hindu co-parcener objects to the marriage he can enforce his right of partition. A clause like this discourages marriages under the Special Marriage Act. Then, Sir, a man who marries under the Special Marriage Act is subject to the same disabilities with regard to any collateral property as a person to whom the caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850 applies. That is to say, a person who marries under the Special Marriage Act cannot succeed to collateral succession. There is a further disqualification from which he suffers if he marries under the Special Marriage Act. He cannot hold any religious office or manage any religious or charitable trust. Why should this be so? He is a Hindu. He has not to declare that he is not a Hindu. Therefore, why should he not be qualified to hold a religious office or administer a religious trust. Then the Succession Act applies to the property of any person who marries in the civil form. Why should that be so? No person, Sir, who marries under this Act has any right of adoption. Now, Sir, I do not think my Muhammadan friends will agree with me here, but I do think the institution of adoption is a thoroughly good one. It enables a man to have a future. Why should the right of adoption be denied to anyone who marries under the Special Marriage Act?

The Honourable The President: That is all very well. But what proof will there be that the marriage is monogamous?

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: Sir, what proof of monogamy is there in any country in the world?

The Honourable the President: I particularly ask you because you want to make registration optional.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: The second marriage will be invalid and then, Sir, there is a further clause in the Special Marriage Act and that is, the father has been given the right to adopt another son, if his son marries under the Special Marriage Act. Now, Sir, all this imposes disabilities on a man who marries under the Special Marriage Act and the result of the present law is to discourage marriages under the Special Marriage Act. Now, Sir, the position, as I understand it, is this. If the religious form follows the registration, the effective marriage is the registered marriage and the religious marriage and the parties belong to the same caste, then I take it the effective marriage would be the religious marriage and therefore the marriage would be indissoluble. That

is the law, as I understand it, today,—Mr Puckle will correct me if I am wrong. I would like all this to change. If a marriage has been registered and the registration follows the religious marriage, then accounting to the suggestion that I make in the Resolution, the effect of registration would be to make the marriage monogamous. It would be monogamous in any case because I would like all Hindu marriages to be monogamous but the effect of registration would be to make it monogamous and also dissoluble.

The Honourable Maharajadhiraja Sir Kameshwar Singh of Darbhanga (Bihar: Non-Muhammadan): Does not the Hindu religion disallow dissolution of marriage?

The Honourable Sir David Devadoss (Nominated Non-official): It is a sacrament.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: I am giving the right to the parties to contract at the time of marriage for divorce. A clause like this would give security to educated girls who often find themselves deserted. There have been cases, and I have known many of them, where young men have deserted their first wives and married other women. The poor Hindu woman has no remedy. Her life thereafter is a tragedy ...

The Honourable The President: If he gives an undertaking at the time of marriage and if he does not fulfil it—what about that?

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: If the marriage is made monogamous, then of course he will be subject to the law of bigamy. He will incur a penalty.

The Honourable Sir A. P. Patro: You are referring to adult marriages where people are in a position to contract and not to child marriages.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: As a matter of fact, I would like no child marriages at all. A change in the law would enable parents of young women to have their interests protected and safeguarded at the time of the marriage.

The Honourable Mr Ramadas Pantulu: The Sarda Act is in force.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: It is in force only in name.

The Honourable The President: Even the Sarda Act is not a success.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: These changes are necessary in the constitution of this age one Hindu society and we have to approach these questions from the modern point of view. We can not approach them from the point of view of people who lived 4,000 years back. They had their problems.

The Honourable Sir David Devadoss: Is society behind you?

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: I think, Sir, I am more in touch with my society than Sir David Devadoss who belongs to another society and who can not speak with the same authority that I can about my society.

The Honourable Maharajadhiraja Sir Kameshwar Singh of Darbhanga: Most of the Indian people will be against you in this matter.

The Honourable Sir David Devadoss: There is the Maharaja Saheb supporting me.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: I recognize that orthodox sentiment, which is represented by my very distinguished and noble friend, the Maharaja of Darbhanga, is generally against divorce. But educated men and educated women are, generally speaking, for it today. Women's organizations have been asking for divorce. Divorce is not unknown to Hindu law. Among the lower castes, divorce is not unknown, and it is often enforced by panchayats. It is only among the higher classes that we have no divorce. Now, Sir, I do not wish to argue the case for divorce at great length. I may say, and I say it quite frankly, that I am a strong believer in it. The problem of mutual adjustment in marriage is becoming increasingly difficult. It will become even more difficult with the advancing education of women. The old ideal of marriage depended on the position of the husband in the home and the readiness of the wife to subordinate her will to his. It is doubtful if

the education women of tomorrow, with a developed personality of her own, will be as ready as her sister was to subordinate herself to the husband.

The Honourable Sir David Devadoss: She won't get a husband; that is all.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: I think she will get a husband. I think most husbands prefer to take educated wives, but I doubt whether they respect the personality that is in the woman.

The Honourable The President: All these points will be considered by the committee.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: I am just mentioning them Social laws ought to make allowance for these cases of individual hardship. Divorce would not lower but would equalize the standards. At present, unfortunately, we have unequal sex standards for men and women. The wife has no redress against the husband who is unfaithful to her and who ill-treats her. Divorce would enable women to exact a higher ethical standard from man. The remedy of divorce is necessary in the higher interests of society. It is necessary for its spiritual and moral welfare. The relation of husband and wife is an honourable one. Marriage is an essential institution for society. But the system of making people live together when they have ceased to love each other and when they have ceased to care for each other is absolutely unwholesome. Marriage ought to be dissoluble when the fundamental purpose of marriage has been frustrated. The present position, if I may say so—I am speaking quite frankly—emphasizes the carnal aspect of marriage only. Marriage for the modern man—and I approach this question not from the point of view of a religious Hindu but from the point of view of a modern man—is a union of two souls reverencing the life that is in each other. If I may say so, divorce was not also unknown to the ancient Hindus. There are texts in some of the sacred books in favour of divorce. But I do not base my case upon texts. Hindus—and I claim to be a good Hindu in many ways; philosophically I am a Hindu—Hindus, Sir, believe in a progressive revelation. They believe that the problems of today are different from the problems of old. Hindu society has shown a marvelous capacity for adoption in the past. Hindu society has never been static. It must show that it is capable of adjusting itself to the changing conditions of the modern world. I can, Sir, if I wanted to employ another kind of argument, cite cases where in order to dissolve a marriage which had become intolerable, men and women have had to resort to ugly devices to get rid of it. They had to change their religion in order to get rid of it. There is another argument that I would advance in favour of divorce. In the disturbed atmosphere of a home it is not possible for children to grow up into healthy children. They are certain to suffer as psychology tells us, from certain complexes in later life, if they are brought up in an unhappy home. The morality of the future will, therefore, have to take into account the findings of physiology, biology and psychology. We cannot allow ourselves to be dictated to by social obscurantist and social reactionaries. We cannot, Sir, stand for progress in political and economic matters and stand for reaction in social matters. I, therefore, Sir, plead for a modern approach to the problem. Whatever my own individual opinions might be, in this Resolution I have shown a spirit of accommodation. My suggestions respect the wishes of those who would like marriage to remain a sacrament and at the same time gives liberty to those who have a different conception of marriage. I am merely in this Resolution asking for a committee. A committee would enable us to give a correct index of opinions. It is true that on the various Bills that are pending here Government has had a large number of opinions. But then, those opinions have not been tested by cross-examination; they have not been subjected to close scrutiny by a committee representative of various interests, and therefore I would suggest that a committee is desirable to consider this question. I have tried to extent. I have tried to explain my Resolution. I have tried to explain where the law is faulty at present. I have tried to explain what the hardships of those who have to marry under the Special Marriage Act are. I have tried to point out that if parties belong to the same caste and they marry first in the religious form and they then marry under the Special Marriage Act they get no relief,

because the effective marriage is the religious marriage and the civil marriage is a thing of no effect. Therefore, I would say that those who wish to maintain the sacramental character of the Hindu marriage—what the term ‘sacramental character’ might mean—need have no fear from the suggestions placed before the House. I have respected their sentiments as far as it was possible to do so. But I have asked for a change in this direction, and I think if a committee is appointed it will be found that there is considerable support for changes in the Hindu marriage law.

With these words, Sir, I commend this Resolution to the acceptance of the House....

The Honourable Mr G.S. Motilal (Bombay: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, I desire to move an amendment to this Resolution. The Resolution as amended would read thus:

‘That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to appoint a committee to inquire into and report on the question of the desirability of legislation which would make Hindu marriage monogamous and provide for registration and dissolution of Hindu marriages by courts of law under prescribed circumstances.’

The Honourable the President: Honourable Members, ordinarily in the course of my practice here I allow amendments to unimportant Resolutions; but here is a Resolution which affects not only the Hindu community as it stands but is liable to be extended by the committee to Muhammadan and other communities. I may draw your attention to Standing Order 64 which requires that notice of an amendment should be given two clear days before the amendment is proposed and moved in the House. As this is an important matter, I would like to leave the whole question whether this amendment should be allowed or not to the House itself. I would therefore like to know if the House has any objection to this amendment.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: In fact I would like to accept the amendment.

The Honourable Kunwar Haji Ismail Ali Khan: I Object, Sir.

(Except the Honourable Member nobody had any objection)

The Honourable the President: I will allow the amendment.

The Honourable Mr G.S. Motilal: I am grateful to the House for allowing this amendment to be moved. We must realize that this Honourable the mover of the Resolution has done a distinct service by bringing up this Resolution for the consideration of the House. Hindu society has for a long time been agitated and has felt the need of reform of its social structure and legislation which would favour such changes. As pointed out by the Honourable the Mover, the Hindu society has from time to time adapted itself to changing conditions and it has lived a healthy life because of such capacity of adaptation. No doubt when a change was attempted to be brought in by outsiders, by persons who were not members of the Hindu community, the measure provoked a certain amount of opposition. That was realized by Government and therefore Government have now more or less definitely declared that it is for the Members, the elected Members, to bring in social legislation and they themselves would not sponsor legislation to effect a change in Hindu Law. It is in a way a discreet practice, but I hope they would not oppose this Resolution if not take an initiative in matters of legislation for social reform. I realize that they have their difficulty. They do not feel strong enough in this country to go whole-heartedly in such matters by themselves. Naturally in their own country they do bring in measures of social reform and put them through with more vigour and greater enthusiasm than they do in this country. I can really understand their reluctance to take the same amount of interest because we are likely to misunderstand them, but the Hindu society as I say—and when I say the Hindu society let me not be understood to mean the whole society; it is the thinking section which always moulds the opinion—

The Honourable Sir David Devadoss: What about the Hindu Mahasabha? Are they unthinking people?

The Honourable Mr Susil Kumar Roy Chowdhary: The Hindu Mahasabha supported my Polygamous Marriage Restraint Bill... marriages should be registered, will be for the committee to consider. I am told marriages are sometimes denied and even when it comes to a question of succession, they say the marriage is questioned. And it becomes very difficult to prove it. Only the other day my friend said that a marriage was denied by able lawyers, and it had to be proved. Well, certainly registration should not be difficult in big cities and even in small towns. All sorts of registration exist,—representation of poverty, birth and death. So this registration of marriage can easily be provided for, though it may be difficult to have registration in villages.

Well, Sir, I will now just deal with the question of dissolution. I know the question of dissolution of Hindu marriage is not a simple one. I am one of those who would ask for dissolution but only under very strict conditions. I do not think dissolution is an unmixed blessing. But it may have to be provided and in what circumstances it is to be provided it will be for the committee to decide after taking evidence and sifting it. When the people go before the committee and make their statements, they will have the opportunity of thinking over the matter with a view to examine how far they can sustain their views and of modifying them as far as they feel called upon. I hope, Sir, the House will accept the Resolution as amended.

The Honourable the President: Amendment to the original Resolution moved:

‘That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to appoint a committee to inquire into and report on the question of the desirability of legislation which would make Hindu marriages monogamous and provide for the registration and dissolution of Hindu marriages by courts of law under prescribed circumstances.’

The dissolution will now take place both on the amendment and the original Resolution.

The Honourable Mr Hossain Imam (Bihar and Orissa: Muhammadan): Mr President, this Resolution affects only the Hindus and therefore it would have not been necessary for me to stand up and say anything in the ordinary course of business. But as some hopes have been expressed by my Honourable colleague Mr Motilal, I should like to say a few words on the subject. Now marriages can be of two kinds, sacramental and contractual. Among Mussalmans it is more on the contractual than on the sacramental basis. The contractual aspect is more stressed. We have got, Sir, coming before our House a Bill which will deal with the subject-matter of this Resolution on the 13th March. We, Sir, are not prepared to advocate monogamy as we do not require it. Our position is that in India-

The Honourable Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru: This relates to Hindus only.

The Honourable Mr Hossain Imam: That is what I am saying. But as Mr Motilal expressed the hope that Mussalmans would come into line, I am telling you that we have got a provision in the Bill which will in effect make marriage monogamous. Secondly, sir, we are afraid that often legislation which is originally started mainly for Hindus turns out in the end to affect all parts of the country. The same thing happened when the Sarda Bill was in legislation. The original title of the Bill as introduced was the Hindu Marriage Act. But in the Select Committee it was changed and it became applicable to all people. That happened, Sir, at a not very distant past. It was only about 10 years ago.

The Honourable Mr G.S. Motilal: What did you do—supported or opposed?

The Honourable Mr Hossain Imam: I was not then in the House. In the Resolution as at present framed, the inquiry is restricted to Hindus alone. I have no reason to object to that. But I wish it to be made clear that by no means should it be made applicable to all sections of people. I would rather like a convention to be established that social legislation of a reformist character should originate from the people of the community which is affected and if a majority of the people of that community favour the legislation, other members have a moral obligation to support

that resolution. Otherwise, the will of other people who are not to be affected by the legislation should not be used either to throttle the legislation or to give *carte blanche* to the reformers.

The Honourable the President: I cannot understand how it can be used without your consent.

The Honourable Mr Hossain Imam: That happened in the case of the Sarda Bill. No opinion was taken from the Mussalmans.

The Honourable Mr G.S. Motilal: Mr Jinnah supported it.

The Honourable Mr P.N. Saprú: I think my Honourable friend Mr Hossain Imam is under a misapprehension. My Resolution only relates to Hindus.

The Honourable the President: He says that in a previous case, though the matter was limited to Hindus, it was extended by the committee to Mussalmans. That is his contention.

The Honourable Saiyed Mohamed Padshah Sahib Bahadur: The Sarda Act was made a general Act only for the reason that it provided a penalty. It was felt that a penal provision could not be applied only to one section of the Indian population. It had to be of general application. That was the reason why the Mussalmans were brought in there, in spite of their protest. I hope nothing of the kind will be done in this case.

The Honourable Mr Hossain Imam: I have nothing further to add to my remarks, Sir...

The Honourable Mr F.H. Puckle (Home Secretary): It would have been a matter, Sir, of some considerable personal relief to me if I had been able to stand up here and say either that the Government would accept this Resolution or that it would maintain what has been called by my Honourable friend from Madras 'benevolent neutrality'. It seems to be my fate this session to stand up here and oppose attempts to put an end to polygamy. The other day, after speaking against Mr Roy Chowdhary's Bill, I went home and gave an account of my doings during the day. I may say that I was accused of being, if not in fact at any rate in intent, a polygamist, and it took me some hours before the opposition was, I will not say convinced but at any rate silenced temporarily. I fear that a bad time is coming for me this evening for I must, I am afraid, say that the Government cannot accept this Resolution.

The Honourable Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru: Why?

The Honourable Mr F.H. Puckle: I will tell the Honourable Members. I have listened with very good interest to the speeches that have been made and with a great deal of benefit. But, Sir, I think, with all due deference to the speakers, that a great part of most of the speeches that have been made were irrelevant. We are not here today to discuss the merits or demerits of polygamy or monogamy or whether there should be introduced into the Hindu social code a system of divorce. We are here to discuss whether Government should set up a committee to inquire into the desirability of legislation on these matters. It is this in the Resolution which I have to oppose. I do it for four reasons. The first is that the Resolution is too comprehensive. This committee is going to inquire into monogamy and polygamy, into the registration of marriages, and into divorce. Well, either the first or the last subjects, monogamy versus polygamy, or divorce, would be full occupation for a committee. I cannot believe that any committee could tackle the two together. And in any case, it seems to me that to put both these things into the terms of reference of the same committee is attacking the matter in a wrong way. The restraint of polygamy and the grant of facilities for divorce are the two opposite ends of the same subject. If you had adequate divorce facilities, coupled with some law providing for maintenance, I take it that polygamy would within a few years die a natural death except for those who prefer that state of married happiness. There are two schools of thought in this matter as to which is the proper end to begin the attack of polygamy: whether on polygamy itself or whether by means of increased facilities for divorce, and I think it is a mistake to put the two into the terms of reference of the same committee.

Now, my second objection to it is that the committee is not necessary. Its chief duty would be, I imagine, to find out what is the state of public opinion, what is the existing law, and to devise some means of changing both public opinion and the law. Well, Sir, there are five Bills on the subject of either divorce or polygamy in various stages in the two Houses of the Legislature. Two of them at least, I think three, have been circulated for the purpose of eliciting public opinion and we have a very great mass of opinion. I do not say that there is not more opinion to be obtained but I think that enough opinion has been obtained to enable a comprehensible and defensible Bill to regulate polygamy to be drafted. I do not believe that a committee like this is necessary to obtain these facts. Divorce, as my friend Mr Kunzru said, is a much more difficult matter, and I dare say we have not got enough information about that, but if I accept part of this Resolution I will have to accept the whole.

The third reason is that a committee is not desirable. Now, speaker after speaker has pointed out that whatever the Hindu social code may lay down, monogamy is, as a matter of fact, the practice of the Hindu today. I should like to refer Honourable members to an opinion which was given during the course of circulation of the Honourable Mr Susil Kumar Roy Chowdhary's Bill. It is on page 35 of the Opinions and it is given by the Commissioner of the Burdwan Division, Bengal. I do not know who the Commissioner of the Burdwan Division is, but I take it that his opinion is based on what he has been told and not on his own personal views. He says, speaking of this Bill:

'Attempts to force the pace of reforms are likely, if they fail to lead to a reaction which may be serious'....

Another reason why I think it is not desirable is that I see no possible hope of the committee reaching decisions sufficiently unanimous to enable legislation to be drafted upon them. If there is one thing clearer than another from the public opinion that we have already received, it is that there are a thousand and one opinions—not as much on monogamy; to a certain extent on monogamy; but on divorce. I really cannot believe it possible that a committee will produce a result on which either private members or Government could draft a Bill which will command the proper amount of general acceptance. These are my first reasons for not being able to accept this Resolution.

There is another one, which is a sordid one, but which we cannot altogether ignore. It would have to be a large committee. I take it that the Honourable Mover would wish all shades of Hindu opinion to be represented on it, and certainly, apart from securing representation of Hindu opinion on social matters, we will have to have an expert lawyer or two and a certain number of social workers. I think it will be a very large committee and it will certainly take a very long time to conclude its inquiries. It will affect 250 million people over a sub-continent, and I think it will cost Government a great deal. I do not think that this is the moment to incur extra expenditure unless we are pretty certain that it is going to repay us.

Those are my reasons, or rather the reasons of Government, for not being able to accept this Resolution. I know it sounds unsympathetic and we shall be called reactionary and retrograde. 'Reactionary' now-a-days is a term of abuse which is used for people with whom you do not agree, in whatever direction they are actually progressing. But it must not be taken that because we oppose this Resolution, the Government are not interested in seeing progress made in this matter, or that we never propose to offer any contribution to the proper solution of the problem except more obstruction. If the Honourable Member will look at the history of social reform in my own country, if he will look at the history of the Factory Acts of the Married Women's Property Act, of the struggle for women's suffrage and last of all, of the struggle for divorce reform, he will find that

the fight went on for years and years before Government—responsible to an electorate, remember—would undertake legislation....

The Honourable the President: I shall put the amendment to the vote of the Council. The question is:

‘That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to appoint a committee to inquire into and report on the question of the desirability of legislation, which would make Hindu marriage monogamous and provide for registration and dissolution of Hindu marriages by Courts of law under prescribed circumstances.’

The motion was negatived.

39. ‘Incomprehensible Action of Jawaharlal’: Jayaprakash Narayan

Bombay Chronicle, 28 February 1939.

Patna

25 February 1939

‘The developments that have taken place at Wardha and the decision of the thirteen members of the Working Committee to resign from it and not to join it under Subhas Babu’s presidentship have come to us, as I am sure they have come to many other, as a great shock,’ says Mr Jayaprakash Narayan, General Secretary, All India Congress Socialist Party, in a statement to the Press.

He adds: ‘The statement of Pt Jawaharlal Nehru, a believer as he has been all these years in the policy of United Front, has made that shock more painful. I do not think that the situation as it has been created demands that it should be allowed to deteriorate further by raising a public controversy over it. I for one have no intention to wish it so. But, as Secretary of the All India Congress Socialist Party, I do represent a considerable section of Congressmen in the country as also the views of the Party, which for good or for evil has been functioning those five years in the country and has stood consistently for definite policies and programmes. Therefore, the Wardha developments call for at least a bare statement of the Party’s position.

No Groups Within Congress?

‘It was as if in the shadow of those coming developments that the National Executive of our party met at Allahabad. Its decisions have already appeared in the Press. The Executive emphasized the need for maintaining the unity of the Congress and offered the cooperation of the Party to both Mahatma Gandhi and Mr Bose in this task. The twelve members of the Working Committee, who have resigned in a group have, however, sought to knock the bottom out of this unity, by raising the question of incompatibility of groups within the Congress. It is clear from their letter of resignation that whatever might have been the issue of the Presidential contest, the breach that has been made at Wardha would have occurred nevertheless, because the time has come, to quote their words, when the country should have a clear-cut policy not based on compromise between different incompatible groups.

How Congress Policies are Formulated

‘In my humble opinion, there are no incompatible groups within the Congress, because every group accepts its aim and creed. If the Congress is conceived of as an ideological party, it would be necessary to change the qualifications for membership and demand that only those, who accepted certain theories should sign the Congress membership pledge and be admitted into its organization. It seems unreasonable first to admit every one who accepts the aim of independence and peaceful

and legitimate methods and then to demand that only one group of these members should shape the policy of the organization. Never in the long history of the Congress has this been so. Its policies ever have represented the largest common measure of agreement between the various groups that have constituted it. Only for that reason the policies of the Congress were able to attain the status of national policies and only on that condition can they continue to be so.'

Proceeding Mr Jayaprakash Narayan says: 'The twelve leaders have also talked of leaving Subhas Babu free to frame his policies. This is a gift that is forcibly thrust into unwilling hands. I do not think that Subhas Babu has demanded dictatorial powers so as to be able to formulate his policy. Indeed, neither he nor the other twelve can assume that power for themselves. It is the delegates who shall assemble at Tripuri, who will ultimately determine Congress policy for the coming year.'

Incomprehensible action of Jawaharlal

'Coming to the statement of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, it has come to me and I am sure to many others, who have looked to him for bold and far-seeing lead, unaffected by the subjective factors that are inevitable in political life, but that should have no bearing on political decisions, as a great blow.

'I have reasons to believe that it was easily possible for Panditji and Subhas Babu to evolve an agreed policy to be laid before Tripuri. Our regret is keener, therefore, that Panditji has taken such a step. There is only one cause for satisfaction in the stand that he has taken, namely, that he has not accepted the theory of incompatibility and homogeneity and that he still stands on the ground of united front. But, for that very reason his action becomes incomprehensible.'

'Finally much as we regret the decision of Wardha we consider it ill-advised and unfair both to the Congress and Subhas Babu. I can only conclude with the following words from the resolution of the National Executive of the party.

'... In view of the Party's share of responsibility in the issue of the presidential contest and of its adherence to democratic principles, it cannot free itself from the responsibility that may be consequent upon that contest, except when it may have to be answerable for policies with which it may not be in agreement.'

40. Rajendra Prasad on Resignation

Searchlight, 28 February 1939.

Delhi

28 February 1939

'We have not done anything in huff or haste. We have taken the step after much deliberation as we thought this was the best course, in the interests of the country, to adopt,' thus declared Dr Rajendra Prasad, who arrived here yesterday after attending deliberations at Wardha in the course of an exclusive interview to a representative of the *Hindustan Times*.

Dealing with the constitutional aspect of the question, Dr Rajendra Prasad said:

Resignation by people who find themselves in a minority is an ordinary occurrence in all democratic organizations. We have done nothing more than that. There is no reason why it should be regarded as non-co-operation. It is recognized on all hands that being in a minority and, therefore, out of the Executive of a democratic organization is not the same thing as operating with the organization or with Executive. We believe that by this step we are vindicating democratic principles. Further, it has been the practice of the Working Committee to prepare draft resolutions which are

placed before the Subjects Committee of the Congress. We felt that it was only fair and necessary to give an absolutely free hand to the President to take help from persons who share his views and enjoy his confidence in drawing up the programme and the resolution for the Congress. It would have been wrong if we continued on the Working Committee and thus framed resolution for the Congress which might not be acceptable to the President.

Question: Some people say that the Presidential election was not fought on any clear-cut issue and, therefore, the deduction that the so-called Left-wingers were in a majority in the Congress was not justified.

Answer: The expression 'Right' and 'Left' have not been defined and in that sense it is true that the delegates did not vote for Right and Left; but President himself in the statements which he issued before the election made it clear that he represented the 'Left', whatever that might mean. He having succeeded, we must take it that the 'Leftist', in the sense in which the President meant the expression, had succeeded. I am aware that he has, after the election, in one of the statements, discounted the result of the election as a victory for the Leftists. That, however, does not alter the position which he took up before the election. We must, therefore, take the position as it was at the time of voting.

Question: Supposing the President unreservedly withdraws the allegations against his colleagues or even withdraws in favour of the Right-winger's nominees for presidentship, will that solve that tangle?

Answer: There is no reason why the President should withdraw in favour of any one else after he has succeeded in a contested election. I have no reason to think also that he is contemplating withdrawing. The question, therefore, whether his withdrawal will solve the tangle does not arise.

Question: What will happen if the Tripuri Congress refuses to endorse the views expressed by Mr Bose in the various statements issued by him in connection with the Presidential election?

Answer: It is not for me to answer that question. Obviously, the answer must come from somebody else.

Question: What will be the attitude of the Right wingers if a motion of no-confidence in the President is brought at Tripuri?

Answer: I have no right to speak for Right-wingers. In the first place, there is no such organized party which may be called a party of Right-Wingers. We do not even know whom to call Right-Wingers. Speaking for myself I can say that I have no idea of any motion of no-confidence in the President.

Question: Is there any possibility of the Congress session being postponed for some days on account of the continued illness of Mr Bose and the creation of an unprecedented situation?

Answer: We are all hoping and praying that Subhas Babu may soon be restored to health and will be able to attend the Congress at Tripuri. The Reception Committee will be hard put to it if the session has to be postponed. I did not know how far their resources will be able to bear the strain, if a postponement takes place.

Question: What will be the position if Mr Bose is unable to attend the Congress session on the date fixed?

Answer: As I have already said, we are all hoping that Subhas Babu will be able to attend the Congress. If, unfortunately, he is disabled by illness, the AICC has the power to elect an acting-President in his place.

Question: Do the resignations become affective forth with or will be effective only when the President accepts them. What will happen if he declines to accept the resignations?

Answer: In a matter like this there can be no question of refusing to accept resignation. I take it that I have already ceased to be a member of the Working Committee.

Question: What will happen to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee of which you are a member and which was created by the Working Committee?

Answer: The Parliamentary Sub-Committee was a Sub-Committee of the Working Committee. All the three members of the Committee have resigned from the Working Committee. The Sub-Committee has, therefore, ceased to function. Along with our resignations from the Working Committee, we also wrote to the President to this effect regarding the parliamentary Sub-Committee.

Question: Now that a crisis of the first magnitude has been created, everybody puts the question 'what next'? Can you say anything in reply to it?

Answer: Tripuri will decide everything.

41. On the Gandhi–Bose Cleavage: Linlithgow to Zetland, 29 February 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI.

15. ...I am grateful to you for sending me copy of the *Manchester Guardian* leader of the 14th February. I saw with interest a further leader of I think, 25th February on the Tripuri Conference and the cleavages which have been revealed in the inner circles of Congress. I do not feel much doubt myself, on the information available to me at this stage, that however much Bose may kick he does not stand chance as against the Mahatma and the former Working Committee, and that he will be made to pay for his lack of discipline. Ewart tells me, too, that he heard three or four days ago that the Mahatma (or Patel) already held, in this connection the contingent resignations of the bulk of the Congress Governments and merely awaited the receipt of the balance. It is obvious that if this is correct Gandhi is in a position in these circumstances to dictate the most humiliating terms to Bose if he desires to do so, or to confront him, if he resists, with the breakaway on the part of the Provincial Governments as well as the substantial elements which stand behind the old Working Committee. I hear from various sources that the 'friendly and affectionate' conversation which took place between Bose and Gandhi when they met at Wardha ten days ago is hardly accurately so described, and that the Mahatma in fact took the opportunity to pull him to pieces in the most unmeasured terms and to leave him in no doubt whatever as to what he thought of him on all points. At the same time, it seems to me significant that Bose should now in terms have formally accepted the resignations of the members of the former Working Committee, including Nehru: and that despite the published reports about his health he should, on the latest information in the Press, intend to proceed to Tripuri and face the music there (all the indications are that the Mahatma will keep away, and his journey to Rajkot affords an excuse if one is needed.). And I see that the list of probables for a new Working Committee under Bose's presidency contains the names of Srinivasa Iyengar and also of Aney. We know from Erskine that Iyengar has ambitions to replace Rajagopalachari; and Wylie's telegrams have sufficiently made clear the apprehensions of the Shukla Ministry lest they are some of them should be required to resign in favour of Bose's nominees. There seems in these circumstances the material, whatever, the outcomes of Tripuri, for a still deeper and more real cleavage between the two wings of the Congress and the possibility, though it would be foolish to rate in higher, of internal intrigues for office in Provincial Congress Parties which might assume importance.

42. On the Eve of Tripuri

Article by Iswar Dutt, *The Twentieth Century*, March 1939.

Since the days of the Surat imbroglio in 1907, no presidential election in Congress annals has aroused greater controversy, engendered more heat or led to graver consequences than the one recently held in connection with the Tripuri session. It is a pure coincidence, though interesting that on both the occasions the storm raged round the election of a leader of Bengal to the *gaddi*. But while at Surat the session ended in a fiasco after Sir Rash Behari Ghose¹ was actually inducted into the chair, now the Congress has been swept into a vortex even on the eve of the session. This is an unprecedented development, and all the more strange as the one who is virtually responsible for it is the very man who is called upon, first to conduct the deliberations of the session this year, and then the destinies of the institution for another year.

Mr Subhas Chandra Bose may have perhaps has manoeuvred for a victory but has certainly not bargained for all the trouble that has so relentlessly followed. In fact, whatever his initial indiscretions were, he has, since his election, left no stone unturned in his endeavours to avert a split in the Congress (unless it be that he has not sued for peace in too unabashedly apologetic a fashion). But today he finds himself reduced, by a subtle manifestation of the laws of Nemesis, to the position of a petitioner for mercy at the feet of the very deities whom he refused to propitiate, and offended.

For the aftermath of the Tripuri election Mr Bose has largely to blame himself. He is a wise man who knows his limitations. Mr Bose is clearly the victim of his own obsessions. He should not have forgotten the background of his own election to the presidential throne of the Congress at Haripura. Was he not elevated by the very men whom he has tried to flout and failed, and whom again he courts now after realizing that his policy of appeasement has carried him nowhere? Was he not a President on sufferance? Was there ever any warrant for his inference that he could hold his own against the Titans that hold the Congress in their totalitarian grip? He misinterpreted the text of Wardha; misread the signs at Anand Bhawan; miscalculated his own strength; and muddled. Truth to tell, he succeeded in office a giant—and failed to impress. He developed a love for power without acquiring the capacity to be powerful. He listened to no argument; heeded neither private persuasion nor public warning. He rushed into the fray without counting the odds, won a victory but lost the battle. He raised false issues, retreated from one position to another, and finally reached the limits of absurdity when he proceeded to Wardha to burn incense at the altar which he threatened to discard in a spirit of bravado. First he repudiated others, then himself.

The whole story would have been different had not Mr Bose, under the fatal hypnosis of the ego, rebelled against the all-powerful MAHATMA. It is too late to protest against current practices in the Congress. It is strange to find the Calcutta press now fulminating against the Fascist technique at the top in the Congress, after meekly acquiescing in the earlier effacement of Narimans and Kheres. You get what you ask for. It is absurd that Mr Bose should have sought to discover the peg of Federation for hanging his claims for re-election on, in the face of an earlier threat to resign from presidentship on the very ground that he would thereby be better able to fight Federation and the men disposed to compromise on that issue. The contention that the President of the Congress is more like the President of USA than the King of England looked queer when it was put forward by a man who disregarded all democratic doctrines and sought office as the leader of the Leftists while relying on Rightist majority.

As for that sensational election, the voters were blissfully ignorant of the implications of voting and had not at all reckoned with the consequences. They did not know that they were asked to vote not so much either for Dr Pattabhi or for Mr Bose as for the High Command or for the Rebel,

and that a vote for the latter would be treated as one of no-confidence in the former. Mr Bose was a thorn in the bed, and a failure in the view, of the 'shadow cabinet.' But he made up his mind to stand for election and prepared his ground well. The simultaneous election of Congress Presidentship and the presidentship of the Provincial Congress Committees turned the tide in favour of Mr Bose in as much as the aspirants for the provincial chairs walked into Mr Bose's lobby with their following on an assurance that in that case the Socialists would vote for them. They achieved their object and facilitated Mr Bose's victory.

It is an erroneous impression that Dr Pattabhi is a dark horse in the Congress. No legends may have grown round him because of his self-effacement. He is one of the oldest Congress leaders; one of the senior-most members of the Working Committee; one of the few thinking men in the Congress. His mind is one of the best working instruments in Congress politics. He is a man of first-rate caliber; a speaker, debater and publicist of the highest order; and about the best exponent of Gandhism. Years ago the MAHATMA publicly declared at a meeting of the AICC that 'I am the Banya Sutrakara (the man who lays down the sutras, that is, the laws) and Pattabhi is the Brahmin commentator'.

Gandhiji decided to have him as the President this year for various reasons. For one thing he is the only senior member of the inner circle whose services remained unrewarded. For another; he is the leader of Andhradesa whose claims awaited recognition. He is also the prime architect of the States' Peoples' movement which has been gathering strength. The Mahatma not only wished him well but identified himself with his candidature. And he expected the Congress to vote for him solidly. So it was really Gandhiji that was taken by surprise and overcome by disappointment. But the blow fell even more heavily on Sardar Patel, the 'King-maker' of the Congress.

It is not a tribute to Mr Bose that the delegates should now turn around and say that they would not have voted for him if they had known Gandhiji's mind earlier or realized the consequence of their support to him. And they have a right to resent Mr Bose's conduct in suppressing the fact that on January 19 he received a specific request to withdraw from the contest, from 'India's greatest man' whose confidence he now says it would be a tragedy not to win. But more than the latter-day reaction of a large number of the men who walked into his lobby, and more even than the registration of the Gandhites from the Working Committee, it is the desertion of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that has cornered and crushed the ailing President. Well might he have said: 'Et Tu Brute'.

In the entire Congress none happened to be in a more embarrassing position at the present juncture than Pandit Nehru. Temperamentally, he has differences with the Mahatma—and he has made no secret of them. Politically, he is in agreement with Mr Bose's policy and programme—and the country knows it. It was therefore generally believed that whoever might desert Mr Bose, the Pandit would not let him down. It was feared that even as in the wake of the Gaya Congress, Mr C.R. Das, the President, in retaliation against the control of the Congress policy by Gandhites, raised the banner of revolt along with Pt Motilal Nehru, so will Mr Bose, in identical circumstances after the Tripuri session, fight the Gandhites with the younger Nehru on his side. But the people who built up their hopes on Mr Jawaharlal Nehru's active support for Mr Bose, knew him not. The Pandit has once for all made it clear to the world that whatever may happen, for him there is no parting from Gandhiji. He is with the Mahatma—and also with Mr Bose!

At the time of writing Mr Bose is sick and silent. There is an atmosphere of uncertainty in the Congress; in the rank and file there is a sense of bewilderment and alarm; even the Leftists are not free from nervousness. Will Mr Bose now realize his position and resign on grounds of health, or will he face the formidable array of Gandhites and fight out the issues? If he resigns, it clearly shows that Presidents come and go while the real power in the Congress is concentrated in the

hands of the Wardha group. If he will not, he must be prepared to face the music at Tripuri and to find that his policy is discountenanced and programme defeated. In either case, Mr Bose will, in his crusade against Wardha, meet his Waterloo.

The most disturbing thing, however, is the pursuit of tactics in high quarters. To cover up internal disruption, the Congressmen, Right and Left, seem to be inclined to gamble on the States' issue. It may lead to civil disobedience, to the liquidation of Ministries, and to the return to jails. But won't they gloat over a united Congress and a combined rally against Federation; Imperialism, and what not? That is another prospect.

The Mahatma's part in this direction is by no means re-assuring. While responsible government is a slow growth, he wants it overnight in the States. Having substituted the policy of coercion for one of conversion by which he swears, he desires to have them handed over to the Congress which, he repeatedly tells us, is a corrupt body now. And while claiming to be not even a four-anna member of the Congress, he wants it to be a play thing in his hands, and a pawn which he alone should move as he desires in the political game. It was in August last that the *Indian Social Reformer* wrote: 'Gandhiji too should regularize his relations with the Congress and stand forward as its leader in name as he is in fact. That is the only way of rehabilitating the Congress in the public estimation'. And now the *Indian Express*, a Congress paper, sings the same tune. The Mahatma should first clear and clarify his own position in as much as he reserves to himself the right of bending the Congress to his will from a position of seeming isolation. He, more than any body else, must distinguish between facts and fiction.

Meanwhile, the country is called upon to witness the awesome spectacle of the Congress which, like a ship with no stately course, is drifting chartless to unknown eddies, with personal conflicts and ideological warfares serving as a basis for 'freedom's struggle', under a politician without perspective, a leader without vision, and a president without power.

¹ Rash Behari Ghose (1845–1921); born in Burdwan; educated at Presidency College; leading lawyer of Calcutta High Court; member of Bengal Legislative Council, 1889; member of the Imperial Legislative Council, 1891 and 1893; President of Indian National Congress in 1907 and 1908; presided over the joint session of Indian Congress Committee and the Councils of the Muslim League in Calcutta, 1917; member of 1917 Congress Delegation to England.

43. The Problem Before the Congress

Article by 'An Inquirer', *The Twentieth Century*, March 1939.

[The Congress has its critics on all sides. The writer of this article, a young socialist of the academic type, freely discusses in the following pages the trend of the Congress movement as well as the strong and weak points in its armoury, and puts in a plea for the reorientation of Congress policy and revision of its ideology.]

II

... But all this was the art of one man; he was the creator of all this awakening, the inspirer of all this hope. Without him we are all where we were long ago. Specially those who followed him had the instinctive faith that wherever this selfless man led, there must be freedom. His march itself was the ideal for them and his messages revealed a dreamland in themselves. But the moment he left them, the dream, like the dream of Kubla Khan, passed away for ever and they were all in entire darkness as to the future. The emotion that moved those people all along was not the Emotion of the Ideal but it was purely and entirely and Emotion of the Personality. And with retirement of that Personality, the emotion also receded into the background; and the ideal which was so far

vaguely known happened to be forgotten altogether. And in its place appeared the intellect which was all along under suppression. This absence of selfless emotion and the predominance of practical and unidealised intellect are, indeed, sure signs of national degeneration.

Am I arguing that the movement of freedom should be devoid of the influence of any great personality? No, far from it. Every organization needs a leader, and the leader of the organization of a movement of freedom certainly needs a personality. But the chief force that should inspire the heart of all people should be the Ideal of Freedom, and the great leader should be the channel through which that inspiration flows. History tells us that each great ideal had its great leader and as the '*Bhagvadgita*' says human heart is not barren. Whatever there was the occasion, there appeared the great man. But his success depended upon how far he was capable of *spiritually* inspiring the people towards an aspiration for the complete guarantee of their undermined soul and of *intellectually* convincing them of the goodness and happiness of the life they were going to lead in the future. Alike a spiritual impulse and an intellectual grasp or understanding of the ideal are a condition necessary for the onward march. An emotion that inspires men to reach the heights of spiritual glory, which Freedom alone can confer upon them, honour and greatness, and a clear intellectual presentation of the true picture of the realities of life to be experienced, are the food and water of a movement.

III

The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi has fulfilled the first condition admirably. It has lifted us into a trance. We have realized that we are slaves now and that in a free life we shall certainly be happier. But the second condition has not been fulfilled even partially. Mahatma Gandhi has not still defined Purna Swaraj or complete independence or that glorious 'Ramrajya' of which he is fond.

Now, what is Purna Swaraj? It is the political freedom from foreign domination merely or is it the complete independence of the nation as a whole from all sorts of environmental slavery of which even political freedom is but a part? Everyone is explaining and defining it according to his own personal predilections or prejudices and the particular political or social ideology he follows. And much depends upon the outlook on life one has. There are people whose training in life does not enable them to realize the misery of their own slavish 'condition. It has become a habit with us to think that we are fit for nothing better while our education has hardly helped us to realize our own intrinsic worth. The intellectual politician says that we shall be nowhere in the world if the British withdraw their military forces. The emotional No-changer says that he prefers anarchy to foreign domination. The Liberal, due to his over-emphasis on practicalities has developed a sort of cynicism, which is likely to end in suicidal self-hatred while the No-changer, due to his over-enthusiasm for the redemption of the country from alien rule, has developed a vague mysticism which might satisfy the craving of our hearts but not the hunger of our stomachs. One is too much of a realist; the other too much of an idealist. The achievement of freedom lies in the blending of this realism and idealism, in the emotion utilizing the intellect and coming down from piloting in the heavens, to establish itself on this bleak earth.

There is now a demand from the youth of the country to rejuvenate the spirit of the ideal by clearly telling the country what they have to fight for and risk even their lives for and what returns of future happiness their sacrifices would bring. In other words, what is the nature of the new life they are going to live, what kind of food they would have, what organic facilities they would command? Even the cry of the Socialist group is a part of this demand. Unless you definitely tell the suffering millions in concrete terms what is that you are going to give them, why should they have any attraction for your cause or make any response to your call? If they have to drag their

lives in dirt and in unventilated mud-rooms with a kind of food even the animals may not like to have, what attraction has your Swaraj for them? Mahatma Gandhi says that political freedom is only the beginning of true freedom. But he does not show even by theory that the future will have entire control over itself and that the whole country, taking advantage of the political redemption is would achieve, would go forward and thoroughly reorganize itself towards complete freedom. The Liberals threaten that they are always there to take charge of affairs when the recalcitrants of the Congress bring Swaraj. If it happens so it would be a great calamity. For the Liberals conspicuously lack the warmth of the human heart which society demands. If not the Liberals, who would do it? The Congressmen? But how are they different from the Liberals? Theirs is a brain unmoved and unmoralized by the heart. And the emotion that moved the Congress for a long number of years to act heroically, we must bear in mind, was personally Gandhiji himself.

IV

Now, the problem before the Congress is the problem of recreating the ideal. It should state clearly in concrete terms what that ideal means for the suffering masses and should chalk out a constructive as well as a fighting programme in full accordance with their ultimate aim. Leaders and personalities come and go, but the ideal of freedom should be set before the eyes of the people, fixed like a pole star. Otherwise, when that ideal is not clear and when it is even blurred, all great qualities that are associated with that ideal, and the heroism it ignites, would sink down giving place to low manoeuvring and apprehensions of the new order. On the other hand, the greater the clarity with which that ideal is kept before the youth of the country, the nearer we are to 'Purna Swaraj', whatever that may mean.

The features of complete independence are the features of the completely independent life of a society—freedom in every walk of life, in thought, word and deed, and for every individual, of every age. For, 'the state suffers even in one individual.'

While the conditions of our life are unemployed brains, unemployed hands, unemployed money and unemployed raw material on the one hand and on the other, apathy, fear and moral degradation, the establishment of complete independence cannot but imply a thorough reorganization of the whole system, economic, educational and organic. Will the Congress promise this? Then the whole country will be with it. Otherwise, it will prefer to follow a new organization. There is no other alternative.

The state which the Congress is out to establish must be an ideal state worth having and worth fighting for. If Swaraj is relieving the country of foreign domination, it is merely establishing the negative side of Swaraj. It is only relieving the country from what it does not want and not giving what it is in need of. The future system should be infinitely superior to the system which is existing now. The type of the government it would have, the kind of economic organization it would imply, the ethical system it would introduce, must amount to perfection if freedom is to be complete. It is high time that a fearless declaration has been made to the people and to the world as to what we want and what we are going to have. The declaration should be unambiguous as well as comprehensive, giving a clear idea of the future life. Ambiguity always incites suspicion and kills emotion. The more the orthodox school in the Congress resents the emotion of the youth and denies them the freedom they deserve to approach their countrymen and acquaint them with their ideas of freedom; the more it tries to live on cleverness and defensive tactics; the less it keeps its position as a great organization, secure. It should itself grow younger or give place to the youth. There is no other go. Monopoly in any form is an anachronism.

It has become a habit with the legal brains that dominate the Congress sessions to think of Swaraj in terms of the political institutions that are already developed by the British Government.

By doing so they are bringing that ideal down to the level of departmental manipulations and political exigencies. The ideal life of the society as a whole which it connotes is ignored completely. It is quite evident that they are all wanting in a complete scientific vision of the nation as a whole, of its internal life, of its organic structure and psychological relationship. That is why the partially political freedom they want could be eternally delayed by such departmental methods as Round Table Conferences and constituent Assemblies. True freedom is social and not political; therefore, any assemblage which does not possess the sanction of the society cannot thrash out problems which concern that society. But when that society is capable of giving the sanction, it would also be in a position to strengthen that sanction with a moral force.

Politics by itself cannot develop any ideals. The ideals are always social; they belong to the craving of the eternal human heart. Revolutions always originate from the restless and dissatisfied life of the society and not from political organizations. When the political institutions which move always on the surface change, it is a sign that the whole society is changing. Politicians are seldom leaders of humanity although leaders are sometimes forced to enter politics. On the other hand, true leaders rise to defend the rights of society against the outrages of politics. Politicians, indigenous or alien, always take advantage of the ignorance and helplessness of the society and are known to use the people in pursuit of their fancies and ideas, or even for their own personal aggrandizement. They limit their mischievous tendencies to the extent to which society is conscious of them and beyond that they are free to do whatever they like. History is a record of their tactics and betrayals.

To achieve true success, the Congress should rise above the influence of these mischievous politicians and become a true social organization. With a constructive programme, true to the ideal it cherishes and would cherish hereafter, it should strengthen the social organization to such an extent that slavery in any form would have no place in it. Work is the greatest hope and laziness the greatest despair. The only thing that can bring all the different sections together is a programme of constructive work which is comprehensive and of common benefit. The edifice of freedom ought to be built brick by brick, with a sincere energy. If the Congress really aspires to be the future receiver of this great nation and a more efficient one, it must strive harder and work on more well-defined lines. Carrying the whole society with it, it should undertake new tasks. The same power with which it intends to fight for Swaraj, viz., the non-violent power of the people, can be utilized even for asserting itself constructively. The realization of the potentialities of this power which are quite different from those of the political power that most of our politicians aim at, is the first step towards true Swaraj,—Swaraj, not of the statesmen but of the people. Mahatma Gandhi is so confident of bringing Swaraj, even if he is left alone. It is quite possible to achieve the end he has in view, by creating a nation-wide emotion of victory through spiritual means. And there is nothing that is impossible for the power of *Tapasya*. But to bring and leave that boon of freedom in the hands of an emaciated people is risking that very boon amidst party strife and communal aggressions. All other schools of thought and parties desire to have political power in their hands in order to bring in the people into their fold, and modes of life by sheer physical force. This may be good or bad but even if it is good, there is a better way. You can bring the people round to your way of thinking, *by persuasion, by education and by organization*, if there is really honesty in it. Leave military power to those who have no belief and could have none, in their teaching. To the fact that militarism is the greatest danger to human civilization, history bears ample evidence.

If the Congress desires to offer to India the great good its people are longing to acquire, the great good of 'Purna Swaraj', it should have a clear conception of what it is and it should also move towards it even from now. The 'leaders' should begin to identify themselves with the people in a real sense. Such democracy as is established when the people are still ignorant and poor, can be changed into autocracy by any blooming personality that can come on the scene. People when

they are blindly led can also be cheated and we cannot say that the great men who are with us will be wish us for ever. Democracies based on mob organization are uncertain things; they are as uncertain as benevolent monarchies under good rulers. The Congress will do greater good by training the people to be fit to enjoy the complete independence it brings to them, fit in every way.

V

The Congress had enough dreams, had enough experiences and tests in life. It has, however, survived them all. Now it should begin to act. The same people with whose aid it desires to become a power in the country would be the source of all its strength and all its constructive activities. Till now except some sort of political education it has given to the people, what has it actually done to the people to enable them to share its desires either actively or passively? It has preached the Gospel of Khaddar. Truly, Khaddar has drawn the attention of all classes for the poor and the suffering. But unfortunately it is a theory based on sentiment and not on science. As even Gandhiji has said in his memorable letter to Dr Tagore 'It is the law of to-day' and not of tomorrow. It might at best increase the meager incomes of certain people by a small percentage but that paltry gain cannot drive away poverty from the country.

From the youth who are morally, intellectually and physically underfed, and from the disease-stricken peasants, the Congress cannot expect anything more than mere observation of its movements on paved roads and in verdure parks. What has the Congress done for the cause of education? Has it established new Universities of its own and turned out perfectly educated students to do real intellectual service to the country? What has it done for its economic liberty? Instead of Charkha factories which have only widened the market of the indigenous mills in the hands of the capitalist, indirectly by creating a sentiment in favour of Swadeshi in the hearts of the people, why not itself open cloth mills on modern lines and put an end to the so-called exploitation? Why mills alone? Many a thing it can do. It can take upon itself all the economic activities of the country and distribute the benefits with impartial hands amongst all its citizens equally. If with the people of this great country as its chief resource, it will with a real business acumen and economic genius go forward and expand its influence into every market of India, it can easily and very soon become the main possessor of India's wealth. And when once it arrives at that stage it can reshape the country into a new statuesque beauty much more glorious than what was seen in the golden age of the past. While ancient times gave us emotion, modern times have given us science. The social salvation of the future lies in the harmonious blending of these two forces.

VI

It is not right that Congress should arbitrarily choose the ideal for the country. In formulating an ideal it has to study the human nature and follow the principles of human evolution. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru advised the country to draw the line of its goal somewhere between Communism and Fascism, but personally he said he is inclined more towards Communism than Fascism. The learned Pandit is a born dreamer though he has recently shown a tendency to develop into a scientific realist. He studied history and his background is human experience. Certainly one can learn lessons from the events of the past but one cannot draw ideals from them. Ideal is something which leaps towards perfection and Communism, as based on the materialistic Marxian principles and the economic conception of history, is only one side of the human Utopia, and by itself, is intrinsically opposed to the social evolution of man which is predominantly religious. You may say that even the communist's feelings for humanity are religious. That is bound to be. Whether one is willing or not, Nature is the ultimate conqueror, and all movements, however artificial and prosaic their beginnings might be, in the end they are bound to merge in her heart and her

universal aspirations. Communism that aims at the purely economic or materialistic liberation of mankind ignores the fact that, along with the demand for freedom, there must always accompany a demand for the moral, intellectual and spiritual potency for the society to be able to enjoy that freedom. Society itself ought to become more progressive so that the life it would live might be of angelic beauty.

A communist form of society where freedom of thought and expression is denied to individuals, where spirituality and sentiment are discouraged, and where moral behaviour of the individuals is governed according to state regulations, is wanting in the very fundamentals of an ideal type of society. If economic poverty is bad, intellectual poverty is worse, and a society which is intellectually dependent or enslaved, is entirely in the hands of those who happen to be at the helm of affairs. Economic equality is but one of the varied features of a pure socialist society; and a society which has to assume the responsibilities of the infinite future and which aims at offering an ideal life for every one of its members, must not be satisfied with merely possessing everything what different individuals possessed, but must acquire that knowledge and moral integrity which the individuals in power hitherto lacked. That is why the communist form of society is accepted by only those who attach more importance to the economic liberation than to any other and derided by those to whom character and education are more important than food and raiment. But certainly the ideal form of society is a combination of these two. And we can safely dismiss Fascism altogether from the argument as it does not connote even the economic equality or liberation of the peoples as a whole. A rule that is based on the pressure of one man who is not responsible to any moral code of the society is bound to end in disorganization. Dictatorship is much worshipped but seldom analysed. The plan of a dictator always comes with a newness upon the wearied people and catches them by a storm, so that for want of time to think and mediate on the future repercussions, people dance at the strokes of adventure of that strange man and gather round him whether he is fit to be their leader or not. We are carried away by his eagle look or laconic voice and when at the end of his career we look back and try to see what we have achieved through him, we become desperately disappointed. For by then we will have discovered that our dictator possessed every virtue to rule the mankind and champion our cause but lacked one important thing, namely wisdom, the impersonal outlook on things from all points of view. As Emerson opines, 'the wise man is the only one fit to undertake the responsibilities of mankind, and wisdom is a spiritual asset.'

VII

Now, as the recent history of the Congress was nothing but the story of Mahatma Gandhi, even his temporary retirement has become a problem to its workers and their hope lay in the possibility of his return to active politics. While the failure of the Congress lies in its indefinite attitude towards its own ideal, the failure of Mahatma Gandhi lies in his attempts to impose his own personal ideals on the members of the Congress. If such a desire of his is to be fulfilled, most of the sincerest workers in it would be forced to walk out and it would be fast converted into an ashram of limited activities. It would cease to represent the country. But such a thing will not happen. It may be possible for the Congress to win freedom through strict adherence to the principle of non-violence but it is a mere dream to suppose that all its members would become equally religious-minded and evolve such faith in the doctrine of Ahimsa and Universal love. The only possible regulation in this affair would be to allow the members to have their own faiths but as members of the Congress and as representatives of the people of a nation, they should adhere to the principle of non-violence. Faith is a thing which belongs to the heart and heart is the last thing that will yield to the exigencies of time. One has a right to try to inspire in others the same faith which has grown

strong in his dear heart but others have got an equal right to refuse to follow it. Who does not love to be free in these matters?

VIII

The Congress should therefore lay more emphasis on the principles which its own collective mind should follow than on those which its individual members should assimilate. It should describe its own ideology in clear terms and organize the country on that basis. The cause of the failure of the Congress lies, not only in the ambiguity of its ideal but also in its defective organization. As long as its organization does not include the masses, as long as it fails to create a new haven, a brighter future in their hearts, so long it fails to conduct a mass movement. And the most inspired of its movements without the backing of the masses is bound to be a failure. Its bulletins should reach each village and its programme must be explained to the poorest amongst its members. Its ideals should become the object of worship in every nook and corner of India. Inspiring the country's heart towards an ideal life, it should begin in right earnest to build up the golden future. It can bring true success or true swaraj to the people only when it enables them to rule themselves. For this purpose it is not enough if it awakens in them political consciousness but it is social consciousness that must be evoked. They should come to know they are one society and that they can stand on their own legs. Unto this end the country must be educated first. If the Congress fails to do that, it cannot bring Swaraj.

The people of India are in great need of such a nationwide organization through which they can think and act. The Congress should bring into the march towards freedom all the members of the society which it claims to represent and place before them an ideal and a programme which their brains can understand and hearts would not refuse.

44. Jamiyat al-Ulama on Jinnah and League

Hindustan Times, 3 March 1939.

3 March 1939

Jinnah's statement, accusing the Jamiyat of having created disruption among the Muslims, has aroused bitter comments among the leaders of the Jamiyat. The matter was considered by the Working Committee of the Jamiyat and two separate statements were issued by Maulana Habibur Rahman,¹ President, Majlis-i Ahrar.

Maulana Ahmad Saeed, Secretary, Jamiyat al-Ulama-i-Hind says:

'My attention has been drawn to the statement issued by M.A. Jinnah in connection with the invitations sent from the office of the Reception Committee of the Jamiyat to various individuals and organizations, including the Muslim League, to attend the annual session of the Jamiyat. It has, therefore, become necessary to clear the position of the Jamiyat.

The fact is that, consistent with its age-long traditions, the Jamiyat office had issued invitations to Muslims representing all schools of thought. Hence the invitation to Jinnah and other leaders of the League. In his statement, Jinnah has expressed the hope, or in other words, issued a command to his followers, that no member of the Muslim League shall have anything to do with this session. Jinnah had every right to decide for himself and his followers whether they would like to listen to the *Ulama* and the *Mujtahids* of Islam in the grand session of the Jamiyat, but in his statement he has gone further than laying down the policy of the League on the question and brought two very serious and wholly unjustified charges against the Jamiyat, which is against all standards of ordinary decency.

The Charges

The first charge is that a few individuals are using the name of the Jamiyat al-Ulama-i-Hind. That only betrays the ignorance of Jinnah of the constitution and the list of the members of the Jamiyat. The Delhi session of the Jamiyat will effectively refute the charge. The second charge that the Jamiyat is doing harm not only to the Muslim community but to the country at large and is one of the causes of existing tension between Hindus and Muslims and an obstacle in the way of an honourable understanding between the two communities is so devoid of truth that it calls for no elaborate reply. The whole country knows that the Jamiyat, since its inception, has spared no possible effort to end Hindu-Muslims tension and it has always had as its ideal, the promotion of unity, toleration, and harmonious relations among the various communities inhabiting India. In fact the greatest obstacle in the way of Hindu-Muslim unity is Jinnah's personal vanity and egoism, a fact had proved during the negotiations between Mahatma Gandhi and Jinnah. Those who have an iota of political sagacity know as to who is responsible for the communal riots which, unfortunately, have almost become a regular feature in our national life. In the end, I content myself with refuting these charges with all the force at my command and deplore that the President of the All-India Muslim League has chosen to issue such an irresponsible statement.'

Ridiculous Boast

'I am sure that the Muslim masses who, despite Jinnah's command, will attend the session will be able to judge for themselves whether the speeches and the resolutions in the session are likely to widen or bridge the cleavage between the two communities. Is it not ridiculous that those who invite the co-operation of all schools of thought among the Muslims are accused of dividing the community and those who disdainfully refuse the hand of co-operation pose as champions of unity and solidarity?'

Maulana Habibur Rahman, President, Majlis-i Ahrar, in the course of his statement said:

It appears to me as if Jinnah's mental equilibrium has been upset by his defeat in Sind and the later developments culminating in the joining of Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, the greatest champion of the League in Sind, in Allah Bakhsh's Ministry and the denunciation by him of the Leaguers as self-seekers.

The Maulana claimed that the influence of the League among the Muslims was on the wane and before long the loyalist section among them who were the backbone of Jinnah's Party would forsake him and rally round the flag of the Aga Khan.

II

A practical refutation of Jinnah's statement denouncing the Jamiyat was provided yesterday when two separate meetings of the local Muslims were held in connection with the Muharrum festival in the Fatehpuri Masjid and the Gandhi Ground. The first meeting which was addressed by Mufti Mohd. Naim of Ludhiana, a member of the Working Committee of the Jamiyat, and Maulana Habibur Rahman was attended 20,000 Muslims, while the other meeting addressed by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan,² was attended by hardly 200 people.

Maulana Habibur Rahman in his speech said that the battle of Karbala³ brought out one thing prominently and it was that the majority need not always be right. If they believed otherwise, they could not praise Husain⁴ and condemn Yezid⁵. Applying the same principle to Muslim politics, he said even if the League had the support of the majority of the Muslims it did not follow that the policy being pursued by it was right. On the other hand, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan condemned Congressite Muslims as enemies of Islam and compared to Yezid.

The meeting of the Working Committee of the Jamiyat-al-Ulama-i Hind which met at the residence of Dr Shaukatullah Ansari⁶ concluded its labours yesterday. Although the decisions arrived at the meeting, which are of a tentative nature, have been kept secret, inquires in circles credited with the knowledge of the trend of discussions have elicited the information that on the main question of declaring its policy towards the Congress which was the subject of a heated debate for three days, the Working Committee has approved a lengthy resolution drafted by Mufti Kifayatullah,⁷ President, Jamiyat, which after stating the circumstances in which the Indian Muslims were placed, declared that there was no alternative for them but to join Congress representing the anti-imperialist front in India.

¹ Habibur Rahman Ludhianwi (1892–1956); educated in the madrasas of Punjab before joining the Dar al-ulum at Deoband; one of the founders of the Jamiyat al-Ulama; one of the main architects of the Ahrar Party and acted in unison with the Congress; attended the Azad Muslim Conference at Delhi on 29 April 1940, which opposed the Muslim League's demand for Partition; organized the Civil Disobedience movements in Kashmir, Kapurthala, Bahawalpur and Qadian; spent well over a decade in British jails serving various nationalistic causes.

² Zafar Ali Khan (1873–1956); educated at MAO College, Aligarh, from where he graduated in 1895; joined the service of the Nizam of Hyderabad; took over as editor of the *Zamindar*, formerly edited by his father, Sirajuddin Ahmad; visited Turkey in 1912 to deliver the purse collected by the Indian Muslims through the Indian Crescent Mission; one of the leading figures in the Khilafat movement, and went to England, Paris and the Middle East as member of the Khilafat delegation, 1925; joined the Ahrar Party in 1929; member, Punjab legislative council, 1937–46.

³ A city in Iraq, fifty miles south-west of Baghdad, and about six miles west of the river Euphrates. It was the scene of the martyrdom of Husain, the favourite grandson of the Prophet of Islam, and his seventy-two companions.

⁴ The Second son of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet of Islam, by her husband Ali ibn-i Abu Talib, the fourth of the 'Orthodox Khalifas'. He was born A.H. 4, and died at Karbala A.H. 61, being cruelly killed by the troops of Yazid ibn-i Muawiya. The martyrdom of Husain is observed every year during the first ten days of the Muharram. From Husain and his brother Hasan are derived the descendants of the Prophet Mohammad, known throughout Islam as Saiyids (Syeds).

⁵ The second Khalifa of the Umayyad dynasty. He reigned from AD 679 to AD 683 (A.H. 60–64).

⁶ Shaukatullah Ansari (1908–72); educated in Geneva and Paris through the generous help of Dr M.A. Ansari who adopted him; closely associated with the activities of the Congress Muslims, such as the Azad Muslim Board (1940–43), All-India Muslim Majlis (1944–47) and the All-India Muslim Parliamentary Board (1946); elected to the first Lok Sabha in 1952 from the Bidar–Hyderabad seat; governor of Orissa (1968–71); married to Dr Ansari's adopted daughter Zohra Ansari, who gave Urdu lessons to Gandhi.

⁷ Mufti Kifayatullah (1875–1952); prominent *alim* of the Ahl-i Hadith school and head of the Aminiya Madrasa, Delhi; first president of the Jamiyat al-ulum, 1919; took leading part in the Khilafat movement and went to prison; member of the Congress Working Committee (1930); imprisoned during the civil disobedience movement; attended the Azad Muslim Conference where he declared that India was an indivisible whole and all the citizens, irrespective of race and religion, were the joint owners of its resources; opposed to India's Partition and co-founded, along with Shaukatullah Ansari, the All India Muslim Majlis in May 1944.

45. Jamiyat al-Ulama and Indian Nationalism

Hindustan Times, 4 March 1939.

[This is a report of the eleventh session of the Jamiyat at Delhi. It was reportedly attended by 10,000 persons, including a large number of *ulama*.]

Delhi
3 March 1939

When the question of joining the India National Congress came up for consideration before the Moradabad session of the Jamiyat al-Ulama-i Hind, the Jamiyat unequivocally declared that the question did not arise at all in as much as the Jamiyat itself was already in the midst of the struggle for national independence.

‘We are living in the age of social and political up-heavals. It is necessary to understand as to how and why the revolutionary forces develop and what our place is therein. The world is changing. The old social order is tottering all over the world. Not only Muslims and Indians but other nations and people also, irrespective of race, colour or creed are struggling for economic, political and spiritual emancipations’, declared Dr Shaukatullah Shah Ansari in the course of his address as chairman of the reception committee of the 11th session of the Jamiyat al-Ulama-i Hind which meet in Delhi today.

Analysing the world situation and laying bare the tactics of Imperialism to maintain its sway, the Doctor said that on one pretext or the other the Western vested interests through their age-old methods were trying to subjugate the Muslim world. The people of Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Palestine were engaged in their fight for freedom, and Imperialism was trying the old method of divide and rule. In the East, Japanese Imperialism was also not lagging behind and temptations of a mosque here and a Madrasa there were being held out to the Muslims. But the Chinese Muslims had seen through the game and were fighting shoulder to shoulder with their countrymen.

In India, the agents of British Imperialism were encouraging fantastic schemes of ‘Pakistan and Cultural Ghettoes’ only to divert that attention of Muslims masses from the national democratic struggle. He exhorted his audience to move energetically and actively participate in the freedom movement of the country, for by their participation they would be playing a decisive role.

The Muslims are socially divided into two classes. On one side there are landlords, nawabs, Government servants and pensioners whose interests are directly linked with British Imperialism. On the other side, are Muslim masses who are economically down-trodden. The middle-class among the Muslims is numerically insignificant. The social division of the Muslim community results in the upper strata playing the role of reactionaries, while the masses unhesitatingly go over to progressive and revolutionary forces. Hitherto, the Muslim culture in India had been the handmaid of feudal elements. Under the guise of cultural safeguards, these feudal elements want to dominate Muslims politically.

Proceeding, Ansari said that the Muslims by keeping aloof from the Congress, will weaken the democratic forces in the country, and thus strengthen indirectly Imperialist domination. The best way to fight the bogey of Hindu communalism lay in directly participating in the Congress activities.

Addressing the *Ulama*, he drew their attention to the problem of Palestine. He said that about 25,000 British soldiers were in action in Palestine, and with an exhibition of naked force they wanted to impose a semi-independent State, so that once the situation improved they might easily re-establish their old bureaucratic rule.

The proposal of triple boycott was before them since the Allahabad Conference. It was their immediate task to bring round all differing groups to subscribe to the anti-imperialist or some such other programme.

Referring to the relation between the Congress and the Muslims, the Doctor said, that he could not understand the purpose of independent political Muslims organizations because no anti-Imperialist struggle could be built up on communal lines. Such schemes had no historical parallels. They could be dissolved at the earliest opportunity.

Maulana Madani emphasized the supreme need of the Jamiyat assuming the direct responsibility of organizing Muslims for the protection of their religious and cultural rights, especially their personal law. In this connection he asked for the establishment of courts to be presided over by Qazis. He also regretted that owing to lack of support in the Central Assembly to Mohammad Ahmad Kazmi’s Divorce Bill for Muslim women, the measures as it had emerged was not as effective as it was intended to be. The Maulana feared that this legislation, like the Sarda Act,¹ would remain a dead letter.

Maulana Madani criticized the Wardha and the Vidya Mandir scheme chiefly on the ground that they had totally ignored religious education. As regards a common language and script for the country, he deplored the tendency of unnecessarily reviving the use of Sanskrit words in the 'Hindustani' language which was being evolved. While appreciating the efforts of the Congress High Command to discountenance this tendency, he accused certain Congress Governments for not putting an effective check on it.

¹ The Sarda Act, also known as the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1939, was passed in September 1929 and became operative from 1 April the next year. The Bill was authored by Har Bilas Sarda (1867–1955), a leading social reformer. It was opposed by leading Muslims, including Mohamed Ali and Mohammad Iqbal, on the ground that the stipulated age of marriage was opposed to the Islamic *Shariat*.

46. Time to Resume Struggle: Meherally's Resolution for Congress

Congress Socialist, 5 March 1939.

5 March 1939

Mr Yusuf Meherally has given notice of the following resolution for the meeting of the Subjects Committee of the Tripuri Congress:

'Ten years ago at Lahore the Congress set its feet on the road to the Complete Independence of India. Since then, the Indian people have marched unflinchingly along that path, through struggles and suffering, reverses and success. The time has now arrived to resume that direct struggle for Purna Swaraj.

While the Congress has been committed to fight and destroy the Government of India Act 1935 including both its provincial and federal parts, it has sought to develop the strength and solidarity of the people before launching on a fight for its destruction. It is now time when instead of merely resisting the attempt to inaugurate the Federal scheme, an offensive should be launched for ending the domination of Britain and for forging the necessary sanctions for making the nation's inalienable right to self-determination effective.

Taking into account the widespread and growing influence of the Congress, the growth of consciousness and organization among the peasantry, the workers and other sections of the people as also the developing struggles of the people of the Indian States, the Congress is confident that this rising tide can be led into a mighty challenge to the very existence of British Imperialism.

It is necessary for this purpose to coordinate legislative and mass activities, as also the movements in the States and in the rest of India.

The work of the Congress ministries needs to be speeded up and the opportunities open to them to be utilized more consciously for developing the fighting capacity of the people.

Those ready for the fray should be organized in a centrally controlled volunteer force which would constitute the fighting arm of the Congress.

The Congress regards the awakening among the States peoples as the most important development in India since it last met and offers its felicitations to the peoples of the many Indian States for the struggles they have been carrying on against heavy odds.

The developments of the past year have made it obvious that it is imperialism which in reality is the enemy of the States peoples as of those in the rest of India.

The Congress recognizes that the States' People's movement occupies a pivotal position in the battle for freedom and assures the peoples of the States of its active support. Congress is gratified that Mahatma Gandhi has thrown himself heart and soul into this movement and has already helped to make it a national issue of prime importance.

The Congress notes, however, with grave concern certain recent developments that threaten the internal unity of the national organization at a time when it is so indispensable. It calls upon all concerned to spare no effort to maintain that unity which, despite ideological differences, has been the strength of the Congress and which has been firmly rooted in undivided loyalty to its objective of Complete Independence through peaceful and legitimate means.

The Congress is confident that if the policy set out herein is carried out with zeal and solidarity by the time it meets against a fit situation will have been created for a Constituent Assembly to meet for framing a constitution for a free India.'

47. Muslims Must Join Congress: Jamiyat al-Ulamas' Decision

Bombay Chronicle, 8 March 1939.

Amidst shouts of 'Allah o' Akbar' and 'Inqilab Zindabad' the plenary meeting of the Jamiyat-al-Ulama-i Hind comprising the members of the Subjects Committee and the delegates passed a lengthy amended resolution clarifying the Jamiyat's position towards the Congress. The resolution, which was acclaimed by the progressive section of the Jamiyat as victory for them, declared in unequivocal terms that in the opinion of the Jamiyat it was essential for safeguarding Muslim right that the Muslims in every town and village should enroll themselves as regular members of the Congress and participate in the activities of all Congress Committees.

Mufti Mohd. Naim (Ludhiana) moved a resolution adopted by the Working Committee after three days' discussion which, *inter alia*, states as follows:

The Muslims by temperament love freedom and hate the enslavement of human beings. Every steadfast believer of Islam is, therefore, prepared to join every struggle for freedom and is willing to make all sacrifices in pursuance thereof.

Though the new constitution is now in force, it is indisputable that it falls far short of the Indian demand for complete independence and the powers transferred under it are so meager and uncertain that a constitutional crisis and the breakdown of the Government machinery are inherent in the situation.

A serious situation now faces the Muslims as to whether they should cooperate with the Indian National Congress during this period of constructive work and the suspension of the national struggle. After close examination and mature consideration of the situation, the Jamiyat has now come to the conclusion that since the Muslims have reconciled themselves to the new situation, have agreed to shoulder the responsibility jointly, are represented in the new legislatures despite their small numbers as against the majority of non-Muslim elements, and are carrying on the Government through their joint cooperation, the principles of the Shariat, reason and foresight dictate cooperation with the Congress in this new situation. The path to political freedom and the achievement of religious and communal rights of the Muslims together with its constitutional safeguard lies in that direction.

Maulana Abdul Halim Siddiqi (Lucknow) supported the resolution. Ch. Afzal Haq¹ and Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman of the Ahrar Party asked for further clarification of the resolution. They particularly inquired about the Jamiyat position in election contests between the Jamiyat and the Congress. Maulanas Bashir Ahmad² and Hifzur Rahman³ further supported the resolution. Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani⁴ (Dhabal) opposed the resolution.

Maulana Daud Ghaznavi (Amritsar) of the Ahrar Party moved an amendment seeking further to clarify Jamiyat's position in regard to joining the Congress. The amendment declared that the 'Muslims should enroll themselves as regular members of the Congress and take part in the normal

activities of the Congress Committees' Maulana Mohammad Mian of Allahabad seconded the amendment. Maulana Mohammad Ismail, MLA (UP), moved a verbal amendment.

Ch. Afzal Haq (Amritsar) moved an amendment which provided for the establishment of an election board of the Ahrar Party and the Jamiyat-al-Ulama-i Hind for contesting elections to Provincial Assemblies.

Clarifying the original resolution, Mufti Kifayatullah a member of the Working Committee, said that they had purposely drafted it so as to leave scope for deciding on the form of cooperation with the Congress in the light of future developments. The resolution was first put to vote in the subjects Committee and carried by 27 to 31 votes.

The amendment of Maulana Daud Ghaznavi was lost, but the supporters of the amendment did not lose heart, as under the constitution of the Jamiyat, they had another opportunity of revising the subjects Committee's decision.

Maulana Husain Ahmad, member, AICC, Vice-President, UPPCC, and a member of the Working Committee of the Jamiyat led the opposition to the Working Committee's resolution. He recounted the achievement of the Congress Ministries in the field of safeguarding civil liberty of the people, releasing political prisoners and restoring the freedom of speech and the press. 'The CID people who used to shadow us no longer haunt us, and we have unalloyed freedom to express our view,' said Maulana Sahib. He added that without the coming of Congress into power Ubaidullah Sindhi,⁵ one of their foremost leaders, would not have been released. He supported cooperation with the Congress for relaxing the hold of British domination.

Criticizing Mufti Kifatullah's speech, Maulana Sahib said: 'It has been said that how is the time of truce. Does that mean that our fight is over? Can we rest till the achievement of complete independence? We should always be prepared for a fight. During the period of truce we must prepare ourselves for the coming fight. Nobody knows when the fight may be coming. Shall we be taken napping? There is the possibility of a fight on the issue of Federation which the Government is keen to enforce. We are not prepared to accept it. The question of responsible government in the States is also heading towards a crisis. The British Government says that it will honour the treaty obligations. Thus they are supporting the Princes in maintaining their autocracy. There may be a fight on that issue any time. The time of truce should not be regarded as time of peace.' Maulana Sahib concluded with a hope that the amendment would be carried unanimously.

The speech of Maulana Husain Ahmad, which was punctuated with cheers, turned the scales against the Working Committee. Maulanas Qasim Sahib, Asad Ullah Nuruddin and Mohd. Yamin supported the amendment. Mufti Mohammad Naim, the mover of the original resolution, replying to the debate, said that as Mufti Kifayatullah had put an interpretation on his resolution which was not intended by the Working Committee he accepted the amendment in order to make the position clear beyond the shadow of a doubt. He refused to believe that the Hindus would make a compromise with British imperialism.

The amended resolution was carried unanimously.

¹ Chaudury Afzal Haq (1895–1945); a resident of Delhi; member of the Congress Working Committee and the Punjab legislative council (1924–26); took part in the civil disobedience movement and was arrested, in August 1930, from Dr M.A. Ansari's house—Dar-us Salam—in Daryaganj, Delhi; one of the founders of the Majlis-i Ahrar.

² Maulana Bashir Ahmad (1885–1955); a leading figure in the Jamiyat-al-Ulama-i Hind and closely connected with the Congress-led nationalist campaigns; member of the UP legislative council (1948–55).

³ Maulana Mohammad Hifzur Rahman (1901–62); one of the most well-known products of the seminary at Deoband; among the founders of the Jamiyat al-Ulama-i Hind; member of its Working Committee (1932) and general Secretary (1942); member of the AICC (1936) and Vice-President of the UPPCC (1946–51); represented the Congress Party in the UP Assembly (1949) and in the Lok Sabha (1950–52); 1952–57; 1957–62). The Maulana represented, along with

Mufti Kifayatullah, Maulana Ahmad Saeed and Maulana Habibur Rahman, a distinguished group of *ulama* who reconciled their religious framework with secular Indian nationalism.

⁴ Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (1847–1949); educated at the Dar al-ulum in Deoband and was a pupil of Maulana Mahmud Hasan; a distinguished *alim* and an erudite scholar, he completed the unfinished *tafsir* of his teacher Mahmud Hasan; one of the few *ulama* of Deoband who supported the demand for Pakistan and founded the Jamiyat al-Ulama-i Islam in 1946; migrated to Pakistan and was member of its legislative assembly.

⁵ Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi (1872–1944); son of Ram Singh of Chianwali village, Sialkot District (Sikh name, Buta Singh); embraced Islam in 1887; studied at Deoband (1889–1905); started as a teacher in Sind; called back to Deoband, 1908, and was entrusted with the programme of Jamiyat al-Ansar, the organization started by the Shaikh-ul-Hind, Maulana Mahmud Hasan; asked to work in the Nizarat-ul-Maarif at Delhi, 1913; taught the *Quran* to the English—educated youth in the Fatehpuri mosque; went to Afghanistan in 1915 and actively involved in the ‘Silk Letter’ conspiracy; appointed Minister in the provincial government, set up in Kabul in 1886 by Raja Mahendra Pratap and Barkatullah; also devised a scheme for the formation of an ‘Army of God’ with recruits drawn from India and headquarters at Medina; expelled from Afghanistan where he had stayed for 7 years. Thereafter visited Russia, Turkey, and Arabia; reached Moscow in December 1922; was deeply stirred by the revolution in Russia, the modernization of Turkey, and the Arab revolt of 1916; returned to India in 1939 through the intervention of Sind Premier Allah Bakhsh.

48. Ahrar and Ulama Conference

Bombay Chronicle, 8 March 1939.

Ali Bahadur Khan, President Majlis-i Ahrar, Bombay writes:

I was not a little amused to read in today’s paper a resolution passed by the Committee of Bombay Provincial Muslim League at its meeting held on Thursday with M.A. Jinnah in the chair: This resolution calls upon the Muslims ‘not to have any thing to do with such a political conference’. May I inform Jinnah and his League that not less than a thousand respectable Muslim citizens have already enrolled themselves as members of the reception Committee and this office has received intimations from delegates practically of every town in the Presidency. This office has already received letters and telegrams from the most distinguished Muslim leaders and orators from all over India. Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, Maulana Ahmad Said, Secretary Jamiyat al-ulama, Maulana Ataullah Shah Bukhari,¹ (Amritsar) Maulana Habibur Rahman Ludhianvi, Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar² (Lahore), Chaudhri Afzal Haq (Lahore), Sheikh Hisamuddin (Amritsar), Maulvi Khalilul Rehman (Ludhiana), Maulana Abdul Qayyum (Agra), Maulana Abdul Kasim Saif (Benaras), Maulana Muhammed Kasim (Shahjahanpur), Maulana Anwar Sabri (Deoband), Maulana Ahulwala (Shahjahanpur), Tajuddin (Saharanpur), Maulana Mohammad Daud Ghaznavi (Amritsar), Agha Abdul Karim Shorish (Lohore), Khwaja Ahmed Din (Sialkot), Maulana Ghulam Farid (Sialkot), Kazi Ahsan Ahmad (Multan), Maulana Abdul Halim (Lucknow), Maulana Samiullah (Delhi) and about twenty other prominent leaders have definitely promised to come. Letters and telegrams are being daily exchanged between Bombay, Delhi and Lahore. I had personally gone to Delhi where I met Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, Maulana Ahmad Said, and Ahrar leaders like Maulana Bukhari, Maulana Habibur Rahman and others: I had settled most of the details of the conference there. It was after prolonged correspondence and personal interviews that a decision to hold conference in Bombay was taken in Peshawar at the time of Ahrar Conference there. We are also expecting Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi and Maulana Shabbir Ahmad. The above respectable list of well-known Muslim orators and leaders is sufficient guarantee for the success of the conference. There is not the slightest doubt that it will be an unprecedented success and will disillusion Mr Jinnah. There is already an incessant string of enthusiastic visitors all day to the Reception Committee Office. Not only this but the most important feature of the conference will be a force of trained well-disciplined, five hundred Red Shirt volunteers to work for the success of the conference. I am sure Mr Jinnah is not living in the world of realities when he dreams of Muslims not having to do anything with this conference. As to our policy towards

Muslim League there is no secret about it, we are opposed to it tooth and nail because we believe it is detrimental to the interest of both Islam and the mother-land. I have already wired to Maulana Bukhari to come earlier and Mr Jinnah will see in a few days unprecedented gatherings of Muslims of Bombay in spite of his resolution.

¹ Maulvi Ataullah Shah Bukhari (1891–1967); ancestors had migrated from Bokhara to Kashmir, later moved to Patna and finally to Punjab; started as a religious preacher in a small mosque at Amritsar; taught *Quran* for about 40 years; mostly resided in Bahawalpur State where as a religious leader had the patronage of the Nawab of Bhopal; participated in Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements in Punjab; first President Majlis-i-Islam-Hind; for his participation in Shahidganj Gurdwara Case and on charge of murdering Rajpal, the publisher of *Rangila Rasool* was convicted for a year, 1927; arrested at Dinajpur, August 1930 and jailed for 6 months for taking part in civil disobedience movement; for active participation in Kashmir movement was arrested and sentenced for 2 years; during the 1939 summer before the outbreak of World War II made many anti-British speeches; for one such speech at Rawalpindi, 3 June 1939, was arrested for treason but was acquitted; on his own admission, the company in Delhi Central Jail of Congress leaders like Maulana Azad, Dr Ansari, and Deshbandhu Gupta had converted him to the Congress viewpoint; toured the country asking the people to achieve independence through the united efforts of all Indians; opposed to partition; but after 1947 went over to Pakistan. Ahmadiya activities there, 1953 and 1954. According to K.L. Gauba, who defended him in 1939 and secured his acquittal: 'Bokhari was at one time of India's most formidable orators. In his palmy days he had few, if any, equals. An oration of three to five hours was a commonplace. Huge audiences, sometimes as many as 60,000 people, would wait patiently to hear him.' W.C. Smith wrote in 1946: 'This remarkable man might well lay claim to being India's most effective demagogue. He can, and repeatedly hold, with his oratory, an audience of thousands inspired and unflinchingly attentive for hours. With telling use of apt poetry and of Islamic appeal, with an unswerving insistence that the British must get out, with a brilliant exposition of a romantic socialism, he has incited the Muslims to restlessness and activity.'

² Mazhar Ali Mazhar (b. 1895); one of the few Shia leaders involved in the Ahrar movement; educated in Lahore where he practiced until 1919, when he joined the Khilafat movement; spent six years in jail for his involvement in the civil disobedience movement; served several terms as member of the Punjab legislative assembly and council; one of the founders of the Ahrar Party and appointed 'dictator' for the campaign against the Maharaja of Kashmir; resigned from the Ahrar Party to join the Forward Bloc; migrated to Pakistan; reputation rested on his oratory, poetry and prolific writings.

49. Mr Bose's Statement

Article by Rajendra Prasad, *Tribune*, 5 March 1939.

5 March 1939

I do not think there is much for me to say regarding Subhas Babu's latest statement. He wants Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to reply to him and Panditji may do so, if he feels inclined. There are one or two points which I cannot allow to go unchallenged. It is no use quoting short passage from his statements and asking the reader to point out where he has mentioned any particular member of the Working Committee. The statements have to be read in their entirety. Once that is done there can be no doubt that members of the Working Committee are meant. Who else was going to or was in a position to compromise on the issue of Federation? Is it suggested that the man in the street was going to do so? Who suggested office acceptance in the provinces? Was it most of these men in the Working Committee or some other body of men? If they were not referred to, what was the point in mentioning office acceptance in the provinces? This method of controversy is hardly fair. It shows a desire to wound without giving a straight stroke. And all this comes after the event.

It is also said until now there has not been the slightest desire on the part of the Rightist leaders to condemn such activities (referring to activities of some influential Congress leaders advocating conditional acceptance of the federal scheme). Subhas Babu's memory has, I must take it, evidently failed him. At the last meeting of the AICC at Delhi the so-called Rightists of the Working Committee had prepared a resolution when Subhas Babu was unfortunately ill at Cawnpore in which the Haripura Congress resolution regarding Federation was reiterated. That resolution also condemned

the practice of extending the life of the present Central Assembly time after time and thus marking time and putting off a straight fight on the issue of the federation and it affirmed the intention of the Congress not to allow this. This resolution was eventually placed by them before the AICC and passed. He has also evidently forgotten that at the last meeting of the Working Committee at Bardoli just a few days before these statements came, he was authorized by the Working Committee to write to a particular Congressman, who had been issuing statements from time to time regarding the federation disapproving of his action. After these two very recent incidents in which the so-called Rightists had their part it is hardly true to say that 'there has not been the slightest desire on the part of the Rightist leaders to condemn such activities.'

No one has suggested that any one should follow Mahatma Gandhi in the matter of diet, mode of living, dress etc. nor has anyone claimed to be his follower in these respects. What is wanted and insisted upon is that the policy and programme which he has advocated have a technique and require certain attitude of mind and mode of conduct. Even those who are not able to accept his philosophy in its entirety can and have been able to help the movement, so long as they have accepted his technique and followed in a practical way the line he has laid down. There is no doubt that in certain quarters these are being challenged and those who believe in them have to consider any proposals that may come up, keeping that standard in view.

Gandhi Seva Sangh

Evidently Subhas Babu knows nothing about the constitution of the Gandhi Seva Sangh. He will be agreeably surprised to learn that some of the members of the Sangh have voted for him in the presidential election. It does not take part in party politics. Its main activity is constructive although since the advent of Congress Ministries it has permitted its members to take advantage of the situation so created for furthering its constructive activity.

Lack of Conference

After the distinct instruction of the President that the meeting of the Working Committee must be postponed till the Congress it was hardly to be expected that the Working Committee would meet. He made no exception even in respect of routine business. He issued no such instruction when he was ill at Cawnpore before the AICC at Delhi. Not that any member of the Working Committee was keen on transacting any business, but it showed that he had no confidence in his erstwhile colleagues.

It is well known that many of us hold views which are different from those held by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It is also true that sometimes these differences tend to become acute but about one thing there is no doubt and that is that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is not the person to bring out these differences for condemning his colleagues in public without even letting them know that he holds such opinion about them or their views. He is also much too honourable to take advantage of such differences in an election campaign even if such differences existed, not to speak of a case where they do not exist at all. It was this kind of mutual understanding which makes it a pleasure and privilege to work with him in spite of differences and the want of it compels dissociation.

50. The Tripuri Congress

Editorial, *Tribune*, 9 March 1939.

9 March 1939

In spite of Mahatma Gandhi's appeal to Congressmen not to allow his fast to overshadow the Congress session at Tripuri, the fast would inevitably have overshadowed the session as it would

have overshadowed all over public activities in India, whether official or popular, if it had unhappily continued longer. It was impossible for the country to think of anything else while the life of its and the world's greatest man was in hourly peril, and it was particularly impossible for Congressmen to carry on their normal activities while the man who, more than any one else, had made the Congress of today what it was, was fasting unto death for a cause as dear to them as to himself. But now that the impending national calamity under the shadow of which the elect of the nation had gathered at Tripuri has been averted, it is only natural that public attention should be riveted on the question which has been agitating all Congressmen ever since the presidential election—how to enable the Congress to retain its character as a United Front. Unhappily the President himself who, both as the supreme head of the organization in the year and as the central figure in the controversy that threatened to destroy the unity of the Congress, could have contributed most to the solution of the question is in extremely bad health, so much so that both his doctors and his friends, including Mahatma Gandhi himself, advised him not to attend the Congress in disregard of this advice is evidence of that high standard of public spirit and devotion to the country which has always been associated with him and, indeed, with all our front rank public men, but it has not made the solution of the most burning problem before the Congress and the country any easier.

The latest telegrams show that unceasing efforts have been and are being made by those who realize how imperatively necessary, it is to maintain the old unity of the Congress to repair the breach made in it by the resignation of the twelve Rightist members from the Working Committee. The Leftists who, at the time, were credited with the intention of ousting the Rightists from power and capturing the machinery of the Congress have made it unmistakably clear that they have no such intention. The Congress Socialist Party have, after a meeting lasting an hour and a half, arrived at the decision to support Mr Bose, provided that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru joins the cabinet, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru himself appears to have indicated his unwillingness to join the cabinet except on certain conditions, which appear to us to be perfectly reasonable. These are (1) the withdrawal of the words in Mr Bose's election statements which the Rightist leaders had interpreted as an attack upon them, (2) the deletion of the Ultimatum clause in the Jalpaiguri resolution and (3) no radical departure in the Congress policy pursued during the last two years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi.

How far these proposals would materialize and whether they would restore the unity of the two wings, even if they did, is more than we know at the time of writing. One thing, however, is clear. The commanding personality and influence of Mahatma Gandhi have been and will continue to be greatly missed during the negotiations for a settlement. It is true that the Mahatma himself did not adopt an attitude helpful to unity in the first instance. But we have no doubt, that his attitude would have been different, if it had been made clear to him that he had misjudged the Leftists, and that they were not in reality opposed either to that unity on which he had always been keen or to the fundamental principles and policy for which he had always stood. In his absence the Rightist leaders, who usually take their cue from him, may find it difficult to take any decisive step. One solution of the trouble probably would be for the President not to form his Working Committee for the ensuing year until he had met and discussed the matter with Gandhiji. In the meantime the Congress may go forward with its work. If the Leftists are seriously anxious for unity they will, we feel sure, take no step to make any radical alternation in the programme and policy of the Congress. The two big questions before the Congress are Federation and the attitude of the Congress towards the States. In the first case the old resolution should be repeated without any substantial alternation. The ultimatum clause of the Jalpaiguri resolution should be definitely given up. In the second case the old resolution as modified by Mahatma Gandhi himself in his latest statements should be repeated. On the other side nothing should be done to embarrass the

President or make his position more difficult. The 'no-confidence' motion, which has of course, no chance of meeting with any support from responsible leaders of the Right wing, should be definitely abandoned. It is in our opinion wholly unconstitutional....

51. Gandhian Leadership

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 10 March 1939.

10 March 1939

The proceedings of the Congress Subjects Committee do not encourage the hope that Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant's resolution¹ will be the basis of an agreement acceptable to all parties. The resolution itself was meant to be a fair compromise. With but slight modification it has been accepted by Mr Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Dev, Prominent leaders of the Congress Socialist Party. With or without this and to her slight modifications, the resolution will doubtless be adopted by a large majority. But so far the extreme Leftists have not accepted it. Speaking generally, they take exception to two clauses in the resolution: first, the clause expressing regret that 'any aspersions should have been cast' against any members of the old Working Committee; and, secondly, the clause which requests 'the President to nominate the Working Committee for the ensuing year in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji.'

Sweeping Change

As regards the first objection, the President himself reiterated his statement made some days ago that he had not cast any aspersions on any member of the Working Committee. We have shown before that this explanation of his clear insinuations against Rightist leaders in general was not at all convincing. But if his explanation is valid, at least the same must be conceded to Mr Pant's resolution which impersonally regrets that 'any aspersions should have been cast' against any members of the Committee. In any case since the Rightist leaders have been held by Mr Bose responsible for what he regarded as a widespread belief that 'during the coming year a compromise will be effected between the British Government and the Right Wing of the Congress' and since he made this belief an argument for electing a Leftist President, it is now absolutely necessary for the Congress not only to renew its confidence in the Right Wing leaders but also to repudiate their alleged responsibility for the 'widespread belief'. Not to do so when a sweeping charge against them remains withdrawn would be base ingratitude towards these leaders.

Untenable Objections

As for the objection to requesting the President to nominate the Working Committee for the ensuing year 'in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji', one fails to understand why exception should be taken to this procedure. It only commends the continuance of a practice that has been substantially followed these many years. Moreover, as the general leadership of the Congress is to continue to be imposed upon Gandhiji, that leadership must be real and not merely nominal. He should have the right to command for the Congress Executive men in whom he has the fullest confidence. It has been objected that this clause is undemocratic as it amounts to inaugurating dictatorship and a vote of censure on the delegates who elected Mr Bose as President, expecting him to form his own Cabinet. These objections are all untenable. There is no more dictatorship in Gandhiji deciding the personnel of the Committee than in the President doing so. In either case the Committee is responsible to a most democratically elected AICC. As regards the second objection, it should be noted that the proposal in question presupposes that Gandhian policy and

leadership are to continue, at any rate during the next year. If so, it is out natural that the delegates who insist on this policy should ask Gandhiji himself to form the Committee to carry it out. There can be no question of delegates censuring themselves. If it is asked how this can be reconciled with the delegates electing Mr Bose as President, expecting him to form his own Cabinet, the reply is: The delegates elected Mr Bose under a misunderstanding, if not misdirection; even then they elected him with certain reservations, some of which were even published several days ago; but now, the position being clarified, the reservations too are made clear. The same democracy that gives the delegates the right to elect their President gives them the right to request him how to proceed in implementing a policy which they command. The country would be happy if even at this stage an agreement is arrived at between all the parties concerned. But if that is not possible, Mr Pant's resolution, with or without the modifications suggested by Mr Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Dev, will be the next best solution, acceptable, we have no doubt, to a large majority among the delegates.

¹ It was said that if the resolution was carried without the aspersion clause modified, it would in effect mean a vote of no-confidence in Bose and he would have to resign. M.N. Roy, Aney, Nariman, Sarat Chandra Bose, Sardul Singh participated in the discussion. A delegate from Bengal described the resolution as sinister in its motives. Rajagopalachari and others called it an innocent resolution: it merely meant a vote of confidence in Gandhi. With the President's permission Sardar Sardul Singh asked Pant whether in view of the President's statement, he proposed to delete the portion relating to aspersions.

Pant declared that after the President's statement, several amendments had been moved and they were before the house. Whether the amendment should be accepted or not was not in his hands but in the hands of the house. When it became necessary for him to say anything on the President's statements, he would certainly do so; for the present he would prefer to listen to the speeches and interpretations of the speakers. Satyamurti asked the house to reject all the amendments.

When the subjects committee met on 9 March Bose arrived in an ambulance and was brought in on a stretcher. Bose made an appeal for moderation and restraints. After a debate of seven and a half hours, Narendra Deva was speaking when the electric lights went out and loudspeaker arrangements were out of action. With the aid of gas lamps, Narendra Dev concluded his speech saying that Pant had still an open mind and expressing the hope that the leaders would accept the socialist amendments. When Pant was called upon to reply, there were insistent cries for adjournment and the President adjourned the house till next day, 10 March.

52. Tripuri Session

Editorial, *Forward*, 11 March 1939.

11 March 1939

[Extract]

Reports of the developments at Tripuri that have been received till the time of writing do not indicate a hopeful situation. A general desire for unity may have eased the situation to some extent, but the prospect of a real understanding and unity is not much in evidence. The Wardha group headed by Sardar Patel show little desire for compromise. The Rightists have a majority in AICC and they hope to command one also in the open session of the Congress. This situation to a great extent explains the adamant attitude of the Right wing leaders.

The resolution which Pandit Pant moved and which was subsequently passed by the subjects Committee,¹ besides expressing confidence in the Working Committee of the last year, regrets that any aspersions should have been cast against any of its members....

The demands put forward through this resolution clearly show how little is the response of the Patel group to the Leftists' call for unity. The resolution in essence is a vote of no-confidence on the President elected by the majority of the delegates and on those who supported him. it reasserts

the Patel group's theory of 'incompatible groups' in the Congress; it wants to make the President a mere figure head of a speaker, it refuses any modification of the present policy of the Congress in the light of the leftists' demand for a more forward policy. The election of Subhas Bose as President, if it meant any thing, meant above all a growing repugnance to the dictatorial and reformist ways of the Patel group and the resolution in question, under the cover of giving all power to Gandhiji, proposes to give the same dictatorial power to the Patel Group....

We do not think that the Congressmen is general, whether of the Left or Right or Centre, dispute the contention that Gandhiji's goodwill advice and cooperation is highly desirable, but to give all power, a blank cheque, to a single individual, however great, respected and beloved he may be, is another thing. Congress must be regarded greater than any individual, however great he may be...

We do not think that the Leftists, or so-called Leftists, whatever one might prefer to call them, want to change the fundamental principle and policy of the Congress. What they want is a strict adherence to this policy and an increased tempo in prosecuting the policy.... The left-wingers want to ensure the democratic functioning of the Congress. They want to make the Parliamentary activities of the Congress conform to our anti-imperialist struggle, the principle venue of which undoubtedly is outside the legislatures. It cannot be denied that the Congress Ministries have been rather slow in implementing the policies and election pledges of the Congress.

As for the necessity of eradicating corruptions from Congress organizations there are no two opinions. But one warning note should be sounded. Measures adopted to remove corruption but at the same time providing handles to those who are in office to perpetuate their hold on it, must be resisted. As for the resolution which presents an incongruous, not to say ludicrous, combination of a petition and ultimatum, we have little enthusiasm, but there is necessity for a resolution urging the people to prepare for the impending fight which will be a strenuous and a prolonged one.

The Leftists if they want to vindicate their position have no other alternative but to take a united stand on lines similar to those indicated above. Those among them who would prefer to submit docilely to the dictation of the Patel Group would betray not only their inconsistencies and lack of political wisdom but also a lack of sincerity. They should take their own stand and if required should be prepared to share the responsibility.

If, on the other hand, the resolution sponsored by the Patel group is passed in the open session of the Congress it would be better and honourable for the President to resign rather than remain as a mere figure head and for the Leftists of refuse to remain in the Working Committee on sufferance of the Patel group, who act and shall act only according to their theory of 'incompatible groups.' In that situation, the Leftists would be able to serve the country and the cause they stand for better by remaining out of the office and working in the field among the masses. They can wait. Tomorrow if not today they are sure to earn the leadership of the movement.

¹ The various amendments to Pant's resolution were either defeated or withdrawn. His resolution was carried by 218 votes against 135. The nine amendments which were pressed took forty-five minutes to be voted on.

53. Musalmans Must Fight the Battle of India's Freedom: Speeches at Lahore District Ahrar Conference

Tribune, 13 March 1939.

Lahore
12 March 1939

'The wisest and the only right course under the present state of affairs is that the Muslims should join their Hindu brethren, in spite of the differences with them, in the fight for liberty. The greatest

need of the hour is that the Muslims should do their utmost to weaken and ultimately end British Imperialism. That object cannot be achieved until and unless the Muslims of India decide to join the untied front against British Imperialism’.

Thus declared Chaudhri Afzal Huq, the prominent Ahrar leader in the course of his address as Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Lahore District Ahrar Conference, which opened this morning in a big pandal specially erected in the Delhi Gate gardens. Thousands of Muslims attended the conference. Prominent Ahrar leaders including Maulana Habibur Rahman, Maulana Mazhar Ali, MLA, Ch. Abdul Aziz Begowalia, and Sheikh Hissam-ud-Din were seated on the dais.

Ch. Afzal Huq in the course of his address referred to the recent developments in European politics and said that the Muslims in India was to give a relentless battle to British Imperialism. He declared that the Muslims may or may not have any grouse against the Hindus and vice versa, but the wisest and the only right course under the present state of affairs with which India was faced was to join them in the country’s battle. It is the moral and religious duty of both Hindus and Muslims to liberate India.

Referring to the Punjab Ministry, Afzal Huq characterized it as a ‘Fauji Wazarat’ which in his opinion existed not for the benefit of the people, but as the pillar and strength of British Imperialism.

The speaker appealed to the well-wishers of India to pool their resources to fight the reactionary forces in the Punjab, which was the strongest citadel of reaction. He was sure that if the Congress and the Majlis-i Ahrar made a joint effort in this direction, they would succeed to a considerable extent in capturing power. He was ashamed to confess that Muslims of the Punjab had been instrumental in strengthening the hold of British Imperialism. The Anjuman-i Ahrar, he said, had been the standard-bearer of the freedom movement and he appealed to Ahrars to resolve to do their duty to their country.

Maulana Habibur Rahman, President All-India Anjuman-i Ahrar, addressing the conference in a vigorous speech dwelt upon the growth of the nationalist movement in India. He pointed out that the Muslims had remained second to none in suffering for the freedom movement. Of the 5 lakhs of people who had suffered imprisonment during the civil disobedience movements, the Muslims numbered more than 2 lakhs.

The Maulana then referred to the great victory Mahatma Gandhi had achieved recently on the Rajkot issue. He added that the Rajkot triumph was not an ordinary matter. By his victory Mahatma Gandhi had not only once again established the efficacy of his creed but the problem of all the States in India had been settled once for all.

‘Gandhiji has won and won without brandishing a sword or firing a bullet’, he said.

That strength and power had been given to Gandhiji by the vote of his people. His strength today was enhanced by the power that the Congress held in eight provinces. Why was Jinnah not cared for even by the British, he asked? Why was his request with regard to Palestine Conference turned down? It was because the British knew that neither Sikandar nor Fazlul Huq were at his back.

The President of the Anjuman-i Ahrar declared that what the Ahrars wanted was to see India free and yet they wanted to remain true Muslims as well. The Ahrars had always remained in the vanguard of the fighters for freedom and they were going to play their part in the fight that the country under Gandhiji’s leadership will launch against Federation. He remained the Muslims that the present Government in the Punjab had come to be established by the wrong vote of the misled Muslims. He asked the Muslims to undo the wrong by persuading at least 20 Muslim members to leave the ‘Fauji Wazarat’. If they could do that, he could assure them of a popular Government in their province.

The Maulana quoting from the Holy Quran condemned the action of the Muslims in Kanpur and Dera Ismail Khan. They, he said, by their action had brought a bad name to Islam. The Holy Quran had enjoined upon them tolerance and every consideration for the non-Muslims. Was not music played by the Muslims themselves in front of the mosques on the occasion of their marriages, he asked.

Concluding his speech, the Maulana made a fervent appeal to all Muslims to strengthen the forces of nationalism in the country. That, he declared, was the truest way to serve Islam.

54. Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Bill

Central Legislative Council Debates, Vol. I, 23 January–18 April 1939, pp. 594–613, 13 March 1939.

The Honourable Sir Mohammad Yakub¹ (Nominated Non-Official): Mr President, I beg to move:

‘That the Bill to consolidate and clarify the provisions of Muslim law relating to suits for dissolution of marriage by women married under Muslim law and to remove doubts as to the effect of the renunciation of Islam by a married Muslim woman on her marriage tie, as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be taken into consideration.’

Mr President, from the Muslim point of view this Bill is one of the most important enactments which have been passed by the Central Legislative during recent years. The Bills, as is clear from its preamble, is not intended to manufacture any new law on the subject of dissolution of marriages, but it is intended to give effect to the provisions of Muslim law relating to khula, or dissolution of marriage, at the insistence of the wife. It is also intended to give effect to the provisions of the Muslim law relating to the effect of renunciation of Islam by a married Muslim woman. Another prominent feature of the Bill is to clarify the doctrine of Khia-ul-Balagh, or the option of a Muslim girl to renounce her marriage, as soon as she attains the age of puberty, if she was married by her guardian during her minority.

All these points are fully described and laid down in the Code of Muslim law, but since the advent of British rule in India the British Courts of Justice not being well versed in all the branches of Islamic law, hesitated in passing decrees for the dissolution of marriage, hence it was considered necessary to put the provisions of the Muslim law on the Statute-book.

The Muslims would not tolerate any intervention and interference by the Indian Legislature in matters affecting their religion. We have got a complete code of our own laws, which cannot be altered and interfered with by any non-Muslim agency. Our great misfortune is that in India our British rulers enacted laws, and laid down procedure for the administration of justice, without consulting those who were qualified to give opinions on these matters and therefore we are now obliged to go to the Indian Legislature to remove the misunderstandings, and clarify some propositions about which the British Courts of Justice have taken a mistaken view.

Islam is the first religion which recognized the status of women and gave them equal rights with the males. As a matter of fact, the rights and privileges which a Muslim woman enjoys according to Muslim law are not yet allowed to women of any other religion, even in the most civilized countries. But it is an irony of fate that in India a Muslim woman was placed on the same level as the other women of the country and was denied all the rights and privileges which Islam conferred on her. Now that the people of this country have got, to a certain extent, a voice in the Legislatures of the country, some of these hardships and injustices done to the Muslim women are being removed and remedied, and it is hoped that in the course of time the Muslim women in India will regain all the blessings which Islam conferred upon them.

The Bill before the House has been fully thrashed out and discussed from all points of view in the other House, and all those who are interested in this Bill, both inside and outside the Central Legislature, have carefully followed those proceedings. I need not therefore recapitulate and repeat the same arguments here. There is, however, one point about which there was great divergence of opinion and expression of strong views in the other House, and which has also raised a great storm of controversy on the part of the Muslim theologians. The opinion expressed by these dignitaries is that a decree for the dissolution of marriage on the compliant of a Muslim wife can only be passed by a Qazi. The opinion of these dignitaries is worthy of great respect and consideration. I do not think for a moment that this opinion was based on any suspicion of the integrity and intelligence of the non-Muslim judges, nor in any way involved any slur on them, but the fact is that in every religion there are certain functions relating to marital affairs which are performed only by the religious heads of the communities concerned. Neither the Hindus nor the Parsis and Christians would allow the performance of such matters by persons not professing the faith of the parties concerned, and this does not involve any slur upon any other community. Personally, I am strongly of the opinion that it would have been an ideal state of affairs if the administration of the provisions of this Bill could be entrusted to Muslim Qazis but, situated as we are in this country, ruled by non-Muslim rulers, and covering a huge area of thousands of miles, the practical difficulties in giving effect to these wishes of the Muslims cannot be lost sight of. We also find that hitherto decrees for the resolution of conjugal rights divorce and other allied matters have been passed by non-Muslim judges, and the Muslim divines have accepted them by acquiescence, if not by vocal approval, and a decree for the dissolution of marriage does not very much differ from the class of cases mentioned above.

Moreover, Islam is a practical and a world-wide religion, suitable for conditions prevailing in different parts of the world. That being so, we must find some solution for this difficult problem from the very Code of Islamic laws. The miseries of Muslim women in India and their sufferings, on account of non-observance of the Islamic law of Khula, are heartrending, and unbearable, and it would not be wise and discreet to wreck this Bill on account of the non-inclusion of one of the provisions of Islamic Code of law. Let us therefore try to find a way out of the difficulty. God Almighty does not lay more burden upon a person than he can bear, says the Holy Koran. In this case, we find two back doors in the Maliki Code of law. According to the Maliki doctrine, in a country where no Qazi is to be found, in cases of urgent necessity it is permissible that a religious body of Muslims living in the locality, whose number should not be less than three, should form a tribunal and after considering the matter they can pass a verdict according to the Muslim Code of law and their verdict will be considered as the verdict of the Qazi. This view is expressed by Allama-Assaleh-Tunisi, a prominent Maliki Mufti; and in cases of urgent necessity, according to the Hanafi School of Muslim law, it is permissible to act on the Fatwah, or verdict, of the Imams of other schools of law. Therefore, the difficulty in India can be met with in this way that the complainant woman should first get a tribunal, of pious and religious men of the locality, set up in order to fulfil the conditions laid down in the Fiqh and after obtaining the verdict of dissolution from this tribunal. She can proceed to file a regular suit in the British Courts of Law, under the provision of this Bill, and obtain a legal decree in order to avoid further complications.

Another device, to avoid the difficulty, can be found by adopting a method known in the Islamic law as the *Tafvil-e-Talaq bawaqt-e-Nikah*, that is to say by authorizing the girl to divorce herself on the happening of certain contingencies. In adopting this method, a document known as *Kabin-Naama*, is executed by both the contracting parties at the time of *Nikah* (marriage) and in this document the woman is given power to dissolve her marriage, without the intervention of the Qazi. If such documents are executed in India and the provisions contained in clause 2 of this Bill

are inserted in them, the necessity of obtaining the verdict from the Qazi would be done away with and after renouncing her Nikah she can go to the Court of law for the purpose of obtaining a legal decree. In this way the objection of the Muslim theologians of India as regards this Bill will be removed.

There is no other point in the Bill which requires elucidation.

I do not claim that this Bill, in its present form, meets the full wishes of the Muslims. Therefore, it is not a perfect piece of Legislation. But I hold that the benefits which it would confer upon the destitute and oppressed Muslim woman in India outweigh its deficiencies. In the hope that in future the conditions in India may be more favourable than now and then it may be possible to improve the law according to the conditions laid down in Fiqh, let us accept this Bill as it is.

With these remarks, Mr President, I commend my Motion for the consideration of the House.

The Honourable Saiyed Mohamed Padshah Sahib Bahadur (Madras: Muhammadan): Sir, I give my wholehearted support to the Motion which has been so ably moved by my Honourable friend Sir Mohammad Yakub....

The Honourable the President: I would like to know the attitude of Government in this matter.

The Honourable Mr F.H. Puckle (Home Secretary): Sir, the attitude of Government on this Bill is that it has come to us as a measure which represents the greatest possible measure of agreement which was obtained in another place. Government will take the view, as the Honourable Mover has suggested, that it should be accepted as it stands, unless there are any drafting or consequential amendments which are necessary, of which I am not aware. Government will not be able to support any amendment to this Bill Sir....

'The Honourable Mr Hossain Imam (Bihar and Orissa: Muhammadan): Mr President, this Bill which is before the House is really, as has been pointed out by other members, a charter of liberty to the Muslim women which has been for a long time denied here. The Anglo-Muhammadan law as was being observed in the law courts was necessarily very restricted. It did not go into the original sources of the law nor did it presume to make inquiries for itself. It relied on what had been the practice of former times. As far as the practice we are concerned with, the Muslim women were really handicapped. They had certain rights which the latter time jurists had denied to them and it is only fair that justice should be done, though at a late hour. It is some consolation, Sir, to us that after all it is we mere men who are trying to do belated justice to the fair sex...

The Honourable the President: The Question is:

'That the Bill to consolidate and clarify the provisions of Muslim law relating to suits for dissolution of marriage by women married under Muslim law and to remove doubts as to the effect of the renunciation of Islam by a married Muslim woman on her marriage tie, as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be taken into consideration.'

The Motion was adopted...

The Honourable Sir Mohammad Yakub: Sir I move:

'That the Bill, as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be passed.'

Mr President, I do not propose to make any speech on this occasion. I will only say that the Muslim women of India will give a great sigh of relief this evening when they come to know that this Bill has been passed by this House. Sir, this Bill will not merely prove as an instrument of dissolving marriages, but I think that it will also have a very healthy preventive effect. That is to say, when men, the superior lords of the world, come to know that according to the provisions of this Act women could get rid herself of an unworthy husband, then probably the husband will think twice before ill-treating his wife or doing anything which would endanger her happiness. Therefore, I think that this Bill will have a great value as being a preventive Bill.

I am thankful to the Members of this House who have supported this Bill and I do hope that our non-Muslim sisters in India will soon have the same privilege which the Muslim women are getting today, and I hope that a Bill which will give the same right to Hindu women will soon be enacted by the Central Legislature. With these remarks, Sir, I commend this Bill to the House.

¹ Sir Mohammad Yakub (1879–1942); President, UP Muslim League, 1926; member, UP Legislative Assembly, 1924–38; representative of Sunni Muslims who met Abul Kalam Azad, in connection with the Shia–Sunni conflict in Lucknow.

55. Women Labourers in Procession

Behar Herald, 14 March 1939.

For the first time in the history of Patna, women labourers engaged in the various factories in Patna City paraded the streets of the city on the 19th March in a procession carrying Congress and Labour flags and singing labour slogans. The procession terminated in a labour meeting which was addressed by Mr Jayaprakash Narayan and other socialist leaders who had gathered at Patna for a meeting of the Council of Action of the Bihar Socialist Party.

56. Tripuri and After

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 15 March 1939.

15 March 1939

Now that the Tripuri session of the Congress is over, we believe we may profitably take stock of the situation and calculate our losses and gains. From the trend of events at Tripuri it is evident that the Congress is fast transforming itself into a party machine, with a single leader, a rigid system of discipline and a more or less well defined programme. The formation of new groups or parties with different ideologies and programmes is no longer encouraged; and it is doubtful if the existence of the present official view on vital questions will be tolerated much longer. The existence of corruption inside the Congress organization was being stressed for some time past, and the cry has now gone forth that the organization must be purified and purged of all dross if it is to function in a manner calculated to lead us to our goal. The nature of the corruption that is supposed to be undermining the vitality of the Congress has been variously described as bribery, fraud and want of adequate faith in truth and non-violence; and the All-India Congress Committee has been asked to revise the Constitution in a way that may eliminate the existing defects. How the All-India Congress Committee will propose to make the Congress organization proof against corruption still remains to be seen.

The existence of undesirable practices inside the Congress or any other political organization is no new phenomenon, nor have we any reason to believe that it is the special characteristics of any party or group. Old members of the Congress will remember the harsh things that the No-changers and the Swarajists used to say of each other; and we remember to have heard pious No-changers declare most solemnly that those who favoured the idea of capturing the Councils were not only criminals in the eyes of all true Congressmen but sinners in the eye of God Himself. The Swarajists, on their side did not take any special pains to hide what they thought of their pious opponents, though they did not go so far as to claim any political alliance between themselves and God Almighty. Impartial observers have all along maintained that there was a modicum of truth in what these political parties said against each other, though they have been of opinion that

imagination and prejudice were allowed freer play in the framing of these accusations than was quite consistent with truth or justice. If this was the case when membership of the Congress meant mainly suffering and sacrifice, it is only reasonable to suppose that, now that the Congress does in many provinces enjoy power and patronage, the temptation to seize power by all means fair and foul has increased to a considerable extent, and along with it, mutual suspicion and distrust. Whatever corruption exists in the Congress organization today has, we are afraid, its roots mainly in the love of power, and we have our doubts, therefore, whether such corruption can be eliminated merely by turning the Congress into a uniform, one-party organization and insisting on any particular semi-religious creed or any particular form of conduct.

57. Gandhian Leadership Re-Established: Outcome of Tripuri Congress Session

By a Special Correspondent, *Bombay Chronicle*, 16 March 1939.

Tripuri
14 March 1939

As the Congress leaders departed one by one on Monday, making Tripuri settle down again to a life of monotone in its jungle setting, there was one question which came up in the mind of every visitor: namely, 'what is the significance of the Tripuri Session?'

It was easy to answer the question, if only one were to recall the atmosphere in which every item on the programme of the 52nd session of the Indian National Congress was held: It was Mahatma Gandhi's spirit that pervaded the whole of Vishnudutt Nagar,¹ though he was not present on the scene. Before the announcement of the termination of the fast at Rajkot, Tripuri seemed to have very little interest in the Congress session, each delegate or the visitor asking the other as to what course events would take at Rajkot.

With happy news from Rajkot, almost a new era seemed to set in Tripuri, the only topic of discussion being the efficacy of Gandhian methods.

Tense Atmosphere

It was exactly in this atmosphere that the subjects Committee as well as the open session was called upon to consider Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant's resolution² reaffirming faith in Mahatma Gandhi's leadership and requesting Mr Subhas Chandra Bose to nominate his Cabinet in accordance with the wishes of Mahatmaji.³ Everyone was agreed on the point that Gandhian leadership was indispensable. Not even Mr M.N. Roy and his nine followers could say openly and plainly that Gandhiji's leadership could be dispensed with either in the near or distant future.

Some of the Bengal 'firebrandist' notably Mr Dutt Mazumdar, who came to be known for his eloquence in the Subjects Committee, were emphatic in their condemnation of Pt Pant's resolution with the exception of that part which referred to the need for Gandhian leadership.

The session, therefore, proved beyond doubt that Mahatma Gandhi will dominate the political stage for the ensuing year as effectively as he has done in the past, though the Bengal bloc was predicting the end of Gandhian dominance with the Tripuri session.

New Congress Cabinet

Though apparently the acceptance of Pandit G.B. Pant's resolution meant a division between Bengal and the rest of India, shrewd political observers say it will really make for unity in the Congress ranks during the ensuing year. The reason is that Mr Subhas Chandra Bose has no other

alternative but to seek the advice of Mahatma Gandhi in the matter and it is considered certain that the majority of the old Guard will be included in the Working Committee.

Radical Party

Just prior to the departure of leaders from Vishnudutt Nagar there were rumours regarding the formation of a new party called the Congress Radical Party under the lead of Mr Sarat Bose. Enquiries, however, showed that no such party has yet been formed.

Bose's Attitude

The future course, which the Congress President desires to take, is no more a matter for speculation. He has decided to go to Mahatma Gandhi for advice immediately after recovery. One important point to be borne in mind is that Mr Subhas Bose does not look upon Mr Govind Ballabh Pant's resolution as a no-confidence vote against the Congress President. He is, therefore, prepared to abide by the verdict given by the Congress and not precipitate a situation in the Congress by tendering resignation.

¹ The venue of the session, in the Central Provinces, now Madhya Pradesh. According to an observer, it 'provided a picturesque background to the political tragedy. There was a wooded hillside behind the leaders' dais which was filled with about two lakh persons... in the evening of 10 March, the hill sloping towards the Narmada.' M. Chalapathi Rau, *Govind Ballabh Pant: His Life and Times* (Delhi, 1981), p. 224.

² In view of various misunderstandings that have arisen in the Congress and the country on account of the controversies in connection with the Presidential election and after and to clarify its position and declare its general policy, the Committee declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies and programme which have governed its programme in the past years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of opinion that there should be no breach in those policies and they should continue to govern the Congress programme in future.

The Committee express its confidence in the work of the Working Committee which functioned during the last year, and deplores that any aspersion should have been cast against any of the members.

In view of the critical situation that might develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi can lead the Congress and the country through such a crisis, the Committee regards it imperative that the executive of the Congress should command his implicit confidence. It therefore, requests the President to nominate the Working Committee for the ensuing year in accordance with the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi.'

³ Pant, in arguing for his resolution, of which notice had been given by Mohanlal Saxena, endorsed by 160 members said that he had received the support of the majority of members of the AICC and in every organization it was the desire of the majority which was taken into account in regulating the procedure. He said: 'There is no other programme before the country except the one laid down by Mahatma Gandhi which the country has been following for the last twenty years. We have seen its results. It would be simply foolish on our part to leave that clear path and to leap into darkness. If we did not have the support and cooperation of Mahatma Gandhi and other trusted leaders who have guided the country for the last twenty years, what would be the moral prestige of the Congress in the country? No one is going to listen to you and me without that support at our back.' It was necessary to dispel the misunderstanding that had been created by Bose's election that it would mean a change in Congress policy and Mahatma Gandhi's methods had been rejected. 'It is also necessary to declare our complete confidence in Mahatma Gandhi's leadership. There is no other programme before the country except the one put forward by him.... If Mahatma Gandhi and the old members of great weakening of the fight. By passing this resolution we would strengthen the hands of Subhas Bose.... As regards Federation, there has been so far no difference whatever in the Congress. The world situation is changing every moment.... Are we going to deprive ourselves of the services of our leaders like Rajendra Prasad, Azad and others? And what shall I say about Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru? He is the one man to whom the country looks after Mahatma Gandhi [Cheers]. Will it be wise, I ask, to deprive ourselves of the services of these veterans?.... And do you think Subhas Bose will be able to shoulder the burden without their support?.... It is true that certain things have been said during the election controversy which could better have been avoided. But I refuse to believe that Subhas Bose wanted to cast any aspersions on his colleagues. In his last statement he made it clear that he merely stated what was the general belief in the country. It was never his opinion that his colleagues were doing anything against the principles and policies of the Congress. [Cheers from all parts of the house.]... We must declare to the world that our confidence in Mahatma Gandhi remains unshaken, the country cannot progress without his guidance and I believe that if his support is withdrawn from the Congress the country will have no confidence in you and me' [Cheers].

58. After Tripuri: Reactions in Bengal

Government of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Roll No. 11, 16 March 1939, West Bengal State Record Office.

16 March 1939

The decisions of the Tripuri Congress and the action of the right wing leaders have come in for vehement criticism in Calcutta both in the press and on the platform. Two meetings were held recently by local leftists, one in 13.3.39 under the auspices of the North Calcutta Students' Federation and the Bekar Sangha, and the other on the day following. The audiences numbered 150 and 100 respectively. The speakers as a whole attacked Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and other Leaders of the right wing. They also condemned the growing trend of the Congress towards constitutionalism and strongly urged that Subhas Bose should resign and the left wing should so strengthen itself as to enable it to capture the Congress and adopt a revolutionary programme. They also deplored the attitude of neutrality assumed by the All India Congress Socialist Party at the Tripuri Congress and exhorted the radical section of the party to resign. Appeals were also made to the radical elements to enroll in large numbers in the Congress and thereby enable the leftists to overthrow Gandhian leadership. Shri Narain Jha's speech was particularly objectionable. He characterized Gandhism as retrograde to their progress and proclaimed that the leftists are fighting for a 'revolutionary ideal'. He exhorted the people of Bengal to rally round the 'flag of revolution' and under the leadership of M.N. Roy. He described the leftists as the 'militant standard bearers of the Congress' and exhorted them to 'shed blood to create a revolutionary leadership against British imperialism by forming a revolutionary party' (Note: legal opinion is being taken on this speech).

It is reported that a joint meeting of about 100 persons, organized by the League against Fascism and War and the Bekar Sangha, was held at the Hazra Park on 16.3.39, Arun Banerjee (BPSF) presiding. The speakers accused the rightists of shelving the main items at the Tripuri Congress, viz., opposition to the Federation and the question of the States' peoples. They condemned Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Patel as radicals and opportunists, who are eager to suppress the peasants and workers movements. They condemned the CSP for adopting a neutral attitude at Tripuri and urged a rigorous agitation against the leadership of the Congress and the formation of strong 'left' group. Gandhi was accused of betraying the people to the British Government and for stifling the revolutionary mentality of the people by his last hunger strike on the Rajkot affair. At another meeting held at Kumartoli Park under the presidentship of Sudhin Pramanik on 16.3.39, and organized by the Renaissance Institute, the speakers condemned the rightists in the Congress provinces for dealing with the labour movement.¹

¹ Also, speeches strongly condemning the attitude of some prominent members of the Congress during the Tripuri Congress were made at the public meeting held at Shradhdhananda park on 26 March under the auspices of the different District Congress Committees of Calcutta and its suburbs. The meeting was presided over by T.C. Goswami, deputy leader of the Congress Party in the Bengal Assembly.

Atul Chandra Kumar, MLA, moved the first resolution which stated: 'This meeting of the citizens of Calcutta regrets the attitude of some prominent members of the Congress during the last session at Tripuri in regard to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant's resolution, which creates a serious departure from the Congress Constitution and is contrary to the practice prevailing hitherto. In the opinion of the meeting the passing of the resolution of Pandit Pant has created disunity and disharmony among Congress ranks.' *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 27 March 1939.



59. The Tripuri Congress

Editorial, *Independent India*, 19 March 1939.

19 March 1939

What promised to be a turning point in the history of our struggle for freedom, actually marked the triumph of ideas and forces antagonistic to a free development of the revolutionary potentiality of that struggle. The Tripuri Congress has reinforced the position of the Gandhist leadership which is committed to a definite anti-revolutionary philosophy. Authoritarianism has at last secured pseudo-democratic sanction. Ethical principles, clearly irrelevant to the political purpose of the Congress, have been formally accepted as the guiding spirit of all activities. So very complete has been the triumph of Gandhism, that it has received support from the most unexpected quarters. The victory of authoritarian leadership has coincided with a tragic debacle of those who tried to build up a left wing on the platform either of a curious brand of Socialism or a dogmatic version of Marxism. Those who started out heroically to oppose Gandhism with Marxism, have ended by accepting the former as a revolutionary philosophy. This fact is a by-product of the logical sequence of events which culminated in the triumph of the right wing at Tripuri.

Great expectations were raised by the results of the presidential election, which was hailed as a victory of the left forces. All those expectations have been cruelly shattered, not so much by the inexorable operation of the powerful machinery of authoritarian leadership as by the abject capitulation of the most vociferous supporters of the President. It was expected that the first sign of a spontaneous revolt against authoritarianism would open a new chapter in the history of the Congress. The result of the presidential election was so unexpected that it gave a rude shock to the authoritarian leaders who believed their position to be unshakable. They were all the more shocked and non-plussed because the election result did not indicate a triumph of the vociferous leftists, but was brought about by a revolt of their followers.

The significance of the election result was more profound and far-reaching than the victory of one group over another. It was the first sign of rank and file revolt against a leadership which makes no room for democracy or freedom of thought in a great mass organization. That revolt has been nipped in the bud. Its causes, of course, have not been eradicated. Emotions were whipped up with the object of diverting attention from political and organizational issues raised by recent events. Blind faith has overwhelmed independent judgment. The religious sentiment of veneration for a Mahatma was exploited for a political purpose. But all this could not have completely crushed the primitive revolt, had there been a really revolutionary left wing capable of coming forward courageously with an alternative leadership. In the last analysis, it was false propaganda, moral coercion, and other corrupt practices which turned the tide at Tripuri. Otherwise, the decisive event of the Tripuri Congress cannot be explained. The decisive event was the resolution which practically amounted to a censure of the conduct of the President and a vote of no-confidence against him. Except that resolution, the Tripuri Congress has not accomplished anything. All the outstanding political and organizational problems are left untouched. Resolutions passed in that connection are mere conglomerations of high-sounding but ambiguous phrases....

60. Tripuri Congress: Presidential Address

Congress Socialist, 19 March 1939.

[Summary]

'Since we met at Haripura in February, 1938, several significant events have taken place in the international sphere', says Sjt Subhas Chandra Bose in his Presidential Address to the Tripuri

Congress. The most important of these is the Munich Pact of September, 1938, which implied an abject surrender to Nazi Germany on the part of the Western Powers, France and Great Britain. As the result of this, France ceased to be a dominant Power in Europe and the hegemony passed into the hands of Germany without a shot being fired.

In more recent times the gradual collapse of the Republican Government in Spain seems to have added to the strength and prestige of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The so-called democratic Powers, France and Great Britain, have joined Italy and Germany in conspiring to eliminate Soviet Russia from European politics for the time being. But how long will that be possible? And what have France and Great Britain gained by trying to humiliate Russia? There is no doubt that as the result of the recent international developments in Europe as well as in Asia, British and French Imperialism have received a considerable setback in the matter of strength and prestige.

Coming to home politics, I shall content myself with referring to only a few important problems. In the first place I must give clear and unequivocal expression to what I have been feeling for some time past, namely that the time has come for us to raise the issue of Swaraj and submit our national demand to the British Government in the form of an ultimatum. The time is long past when we could have adopted a passive attitude and waited for the Federal scheme to be imposed on us.

The problem no longer is as to when the Federal scheme will be forced down our throats. The problem is as to what we should do if the Federal scheme is conveniently shelved for a few years till peace is stabilized in Europe.

There is no doubt that once there is stable peace in Europe, whether through a Four-Power pact or through some other means. Great Britain will adopt a strong Empire policy. The fact that she is now showing some signs of trying to conciliate the Arabs as against the Jews in Palestine is because she is feeling herself weak in the international sphere. In my opinion, therefore, we should submit our national demand to the British Government in the form of an ultimatum and give a certain time-limit within which a reply is to be expected. If no reply is received within this period, or if an unsatisfactory reply is received, we should resort to such sanctions as we possess in order to enforce our national demand.

Our Sanctions

The sanctions that we possess today are mass civil disobedience or satyagraha. And the British Government today are not in a position to face a major conflict like an all-India satyagraha for a long period. It grieves me to find that there are people in the Congress who are so pessimistic as to think that the time is not ripe for a major assault on British Imperialism. But looking at the situation in a thoroughly realistic manner I do not see the slightest ground for pessimism. With the Congress in power in eight Provinces the strength and prestige of our national organization have gone up.

The mass movement has made considerable headway throughout British India. And last but not the least there is an unprecedented awakening in the Indian States. What more opportune moment could we find in our national history for a final advance in the direction of Swaraj, particularly when the international situation is favourable to us? Speaking as a cold-blooded realist, I may say that all the facts of the present day situation are so much to our advantage that one should entertain the highest degree of optimism. If only we sink our differences, pool all our resources and pull weight in the national struggle, we can make the most of our present favourable position,—or shall we miss this opportunity, which is a rare opportunity in the life time of a nation?

‘I have already referred to the awakening in India and to the awakening in the Indian States. I am definitely of the view that we should revise our attitude towards the States as defined by the Haripura Congress resolution. That resolution, as you are aware, put a ban on certain forms of activity in the States being conducted in the name of the Congress. Under that resolution neither parliamentary work nor the struggle against the State should be carried on in the name of the Congress.

‘But since Haripura much has happened. Today we find that the Paramount Power is in league with the State authorities in most places. In such circumstances should we of the Congress not draw closer to the people of the States?’

‘I have no doubt in my mind as to what our duty is today. Besides lifting the above ban, the work of guiding the popular movement in the States for civil liberty and responsible Government should be conducted by the Working Committee on a comprehensive and systematic basis. The work so far done has been of a piecemeal nature and there has hardly been a system or plan behind it. But the time has come when the Working Committee should assume this responsibility and discharge it in a comprehensive and systematic way and, if necessary, appoint a special sub-committee for the purpose. The fullest use should be made of the guidance and co-operation of Mahatma Gandhi and of the All-India States People’s Conference.

‘I have referred earlier to the advisability of our making the final advance in the direction of swaraj. That will need adequate preparation. In the first place we shall have to take steps ruthlessly to remove whatever corruption or weakness has entered our ranks. Largely due to the lure of power, Next we shall have to work in close co-operation with all anti-imperialist organizations in the country—particularly the Kisan movement and the Trade Union movement. All the radical elements in the country must work in close harmony and co-operation, and the efforts of all anti-Imperialist organizations must coverage in the direction of a final assault on British Imperialism.’

Delegates and Members of the AICC who attended the
Tripuri Session of the Congress

<i>Province</i>	<i>Delegates</i>	
	<i>Maximum No.</i>	<i>Number of those who attended the Session</i>
1. Ajmer	52	46
2. Andhra	251	171
3. Assam	60	27
4. Bengal	544	471
5. Bihar	323	273
6. Bombay	26	23
7. Delhi	15	15
8. Gujarat	116	104
9. Karnataka	163	68
10. Kerala	102	56
11. Mahakoshal	147	136
12. Maharashtra	174	147
13. Nagpur	31	27
14. NWFP	53	12
15. Punjab	285	130
16. Sind	39	22
17. Tamil Nadu	232	145
18. UP	498	362
19. Utkal	149	85
20. Vidarbha	35	31
	3295	2356

AICC Members

<i>Maximum No. Member</i>	<i>Number of those who attended the Session</i>
7	7
31	28
8	4
68	66
40	40
5	5
4	4
14	14
20	17
13	10
18	17
22	22
5	3
7	4
36	32
5	2
29	29
62	55
19	14
5	5
428	378

Source: AICC Papers, File No. G-84, NMML.

61. Tripuri Happenings

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 27 March 1939.

27 March 1939

Speeches strongly condemning the attitude of some prominent members of the Congress during its last session at Tripuri in regard to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant’s resolution were made at the public meeting which was held at Shraddhananda Park Yesterday (Sunday) evening under the auspices of the different District Congress Committees of Calcutta and its suburbs.

The meeting which was largely attended was presided over by T.C. Goswami,¹ MLA, Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in the Bengal Assembly.

Atul Chandra Kumar, MLA, moved the first resolution which ran:

‘This meeting of the citizens of Calcutta regrets the attitude of some prominent members of the Congress during the last session at Tripuri in regard to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant’s resolution, which creates a serious departure from the Congress Constitution and is in contrary to the practice prevailing hitherto.

‘In the opinion of the Meeting the passing of the resolution of Pandit Pant has created disunity and disharmony among Congress ranks.’

Atul Kumar said that the resolution referred to above was passed by sheer weight of the majority of votes. They often complained of tyranny of the majority with regard to the Haq Cabinet in Bengal and the something they witnessed at Tripuri.... Kumar believed if the delegates had freedom of votes, this resolution would have been defeated.—Congress Minister, said Kumar, used threats even for this purpose. The speaker said that he had personally heard it from some Bihar delegates.

Referring to the alleged cases of false representation among Bengal delegates Kumar said that Narsing, acting General Secretary of the Congress, told him 'Why talk of Bengal alone, I know that 56 UP delegates used false delegates certificates.' If this was democracy, said Kumar, the world rather go under Hitler.

Hemanta Kumar Bose,² secretary, North Calcutta Congress Committee, said that the Ministers who were under the control of the Working Committee, in canvassing support for the resolution which sought to humiliate the Congress President, displayed want of sense of decorum. Nothing was more shameful than the part they played in the affair. If the Congress was to be under such official control, they would have to rebel against it....

Maulvi Ashrafuddin Choudhury, Secretary of the BPCC said that they did not understand why Mahatmaji went on hunger-strike on the eve of the Tripuri Congress. If Mahatmaji was to be their dictator, let him first be a four anna member again of the Congress. They would not allow him to have such power from outside....

When the resolution was passed, Goswami said that he took it that the citizen of Calcutta or rather of Bengal expressed their confidence in Bose.

Narendranarayan Chakraborty moved:

'This meeting views with concern the state of the Congress President's health and requests the people of Bengal to observe the 2nd April as All Bengal Day, when meetings will be held all over the province to discuss the Tripuri resolution and pray for the speedy recovery of the Congress President.'

Chakraborty said that those who voted for the Pant resolution did so with a view to stifle the hankering for full independence.

The resolution was also unanimously passed....

¹ Tulsi Chandra Goswami (1898–1957); educated in Calcutta and Oxford; a lawyer who gave up his practice at the Calcutta High Court to join the Swaraj Party; editor of its organ, the *Forward*; one of the 'Big Five' who were opposed to J.M. Sen Gupta; elected to the Bengal Legislature in 1937 and was deputy—leader of the Congress; joined the Khwaja Nazimuddin Cabinet as Finance Minister in 1943.

² Hemanta Kumar Bose (1895–1975); joined the Anusilan Samiti as a School Student and subsequently, the Sramjibi Samabaya which contributed towards organizing an armed struggle against the British; joined the Swaraj Party; organized Militant Bengal volunteers in the Congress; close associate and follower of S.C. Bose and an architect of the Forward Bloc; imprisoned during the Quit India movement.

62. After Tripuri: Reactions in Bengal

Government of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Roll No. 11, 29 March 1939, West Bengal State Record Office.

29 March 1939

Bengal's indignation against the verdict of Tripuri and against prominent rightist leaders, including Gandhi, was expressed at a public meeting of about 2000 persons at Shraddhanand Park on 26.3.39.¹ T.C. Goswami preside. Two resolutions were passed, one condemning the attitude of the

rightist leaders at Tripuri and characterizing Pandit Pant's resolution as un-constitutional and undemocratic, and the other urging the people of Bengal to observe the 2nd April, 1939, as an 'All Bengal Day' when meetings should be held to discuss the Tripuri resolution. Atul Chandra Kumar² deplored the coercive methods adopted by Congress ministers at Tripuri to secure support for the right-wing. Asrafuddin Chaudhury demanded an explanation from those delegates of Bengal who did not go to Tripuri, and Lakshmi Kanta Sil condemned Prafulla Ghosh³ and others of the Khadi group for having supported Pant's resolution.

On the same day at a debate held under the auspices of the Marwari Students' Union resolution was proposed that Pandit Pant's resolution is suicidal to the interests of democracy and amounts to a vote of no confidence on Subhas Bose. Mohan Lal Vyas, Narayan Prasad Agarwala and Mira Dutta Gupta (President) and others supported the motion while Bhobra, Ramesh Chandra Tewary, Nandlal Wootwalis and Sitaram Saxena opposed it. It was not carried.

It is reported that Subhas Bose has definitely decided not to resign. After recovering from his illness he will see Gandhi regarding the formation of a Working Committee. Should any disagreement result between him and Gandhi, he will first tour the province to establish his position and then will appoint the Working Committee. It is also said that the Bose Brothers and their supporters believe that Gandhi is not so antagonistic towards them as is generally imagined. Their reason for this is that recently at Allahabad, despite the pressure brought upon him by rightists, Gandhi refused to announce the personnel of a Working Committee. Another information is to the effect that Sarat Bose is considering a suggestion by M.N. Roy that the Bengal Congress should sever its connection with the AICC and get rid of all non-Bengali influence, and should even seek the assistance of Bengal Muslims in order to strengthen its position (vide third part of para. 393).

¹ The meeting was held under the auspices of the different district Congress Committees of Calcutta and its suburbs. Among those who spoke at the meeting were T.C. Goswami, deputy-leader of the Congress Party in the Bengal Assembly, Ashrafuddin Chaudhury, Secretary of the Bengal PCC and Hemanta Kumar Bose, Secretary, North Calcutta Congress Committee. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 27 March 1939.

² He was associated with various local movements in Comilla; played a prominent part in the Khilafat and Non-co-operation movements in Bengal; secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee in 1928; a close lieutenant of S.C. Bose; elected to the Bengal PCC in 1938; joined the Forward Bloc a year later.

³ Prafulla Chandra Ghosh (b.1891); educated at Dacca College and the Calcutta University; drawn into the Anusilan Samiti in 1910 which he left in 1913; attended the Calcutta Congress in 1917 and 1920; took up constructive work during the Non-Co-operation movement; arrested in 1930 for conducting the satyagraha campaign in Midnapore; supporter of Pattabhi Sitaramayya against S.C. Bose; arrested during the Quit India movement; organized the Krishak Mazdoor Party in 1953; member of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly (1956-66); Chief Minister of Bengal (1947-48) and from 1967 until the mid-term poll in 1969.

63. Split in Provincial Congress Cabinet

Behar Herald, 29 March 1939.

29 March 1939

Mr Ramnarayan Singh,¹ member of Working Committee of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee has resigned from that body. The immediate cause of his resignation, as stated in his resignation letter, is the nomination by the Provincial Working Committee, of one Babu Ramprakash Lal for election to the Hazaribagh District Board. It appears, however, that a tug of war had been going on for a pretty long time between Mr Ramnarayan Singh and Mr Krishnaballabh Sahay,² parliamentary Secretary always resulting in the victory of the latter who appears to have got greater influence with the provincial Congress authorities. The breaking point was reached when

the Provincial Congress Working Committee accepted the nominee of Mr K.B. Sahay brushing aside all the objections and protests of Mr Ramnarayan Singh.

¹ Ramnarayan Singh (1885–1964); educated in Hazaribagh Zila School and Ripon College, Calcutta; joined the Non Cooperation movement in 1921 and was closely associated with Rajendra Prasad in provincial and national politics; member of the central legislative assembly (1936–46), and of the Indian Constituent Assembly.

² Krishna Ballabh Sahay (1898–1974); educated at Hazaribagh and Patna; gave up studies to join the Non-Co-operation movement; member of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee from the twenties; entered the Bihar Legislative Council in 1923; when the first Congress ministry was formed in 1937, he was elected as one of the eight parliamentary secretaries; took leading part in the Quit India movement; became a minister in 1946 and was in office for 12 years; took a leading part in the abolition of the zamindari system in Bihar; Chief Minister of Bihar in 1963; a radical social reformer; champion of female education and advocated abolition of the dowry system.

64. Congress Organization Broken to Pieces

Behar Herald, 29 March 1939.

29 March 1939

The Congress organization in Bihar appears to have gone into pieces over the issue of the general election of the District Boards. Prominent Congress leaders such as Mr Deep Narayan Singh¹ of Hajipur and Thakur Ramnandan Singh of Sitamarhi are reported to have resigned while the Shahabad District Congress Committee as a whole is stated to have resolved to dissociate itself from the D.B. election in Shahabad as a protest against the selection of candidates by the provincial Congress Committee. In Darbhanga prominent office-bearers of Thana Congress Committee are said to have entered the field against the official Congress nominees for election. In Saran, Mr Biresh Dutta MLA is reported to have openly revolted against the Congress decision. Split is prominently manifesting itself in every district and everywhere Congressmen are pitting themselves against Congressmen. It may be noted that personal rivalries rather than ideological differences are influencing the course of events everywhere for the Kisan Sabha and the Congress Socialist Party, as parties, have kept themselves aloof from the election. Taking advantage of the split in the ranks of the Congress, the Hindu Sabha also has entered into contest with the Congress.

¹ Born in 1875, Deep Narayan Singh belonged to a zamindar family of Bhagalpur; educated at Bhagalpur and Trinity College, Cambridge; involved in nationalist campaigns from the time of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal; created the Tilak Swaraj Fund in Bihar; President of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee in 1928; worked for the promotion of communal harmony, Swadeshi goods and primary education.

65. Gandhi–Bose Correspondence: Bose to Gandhi, 29 March 1939*

CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 448–49.

Jealgora P.O.,
29 March 1939

My dear Mahatmaji,

I received your letter of the 24th instant¹ from the train, along with the enclosures.²

Firstly, my brother, Sarat,³ wrote to you on his own. You will see from his letter that he got your telegram on his return to Calcutta from here and then he wrote to you. If he had not got your telegram, I doubt if he would have written.

There are, of course, certain things in his letter which echo my feelings. But that is a different matter. The main problem appears to me as to whether both parties can forget the past and work

together. That depends entirely on you. If you can command the confidence of both parties by taking up a truly non-partisan attitude, then you can save the Congress and restore national unity.

I am temperamentally not a vindictive person and I do not nurse grievances. In a way, I have the mentality of a boxer, that is, to shake hands smilingly when the boxing bout is over and take the result in a sporting spirit.

Secondly, in spite of all the representations that I have been receiving, I take the Pant resolution as it has been passed by the Congress. We must give effect to it. I myself allowed the resolution to be moved and discussed,⁴ despite the ultra vires clause in it. How can I go back on it?

Thirdly, there are two alternatives before you: (1) Either to accommodate our views with regard to the composition of the new Working Committee, or (2) to insist on your views in their entirety. In the case of the latter, we may come to the parting of the ways.

Fourthly, I am prepared to do all that is humanly possible for me to expedite the formation of the new Working Committee and the summoning of the Working Committee and AICC. But I am so sorry that it is not possible for me to come to Delhi now. (Dr Sunil has wired to you this morning on this point. I got your telegram only yesterday).

Fifthly, I was surprised to learn from your letter that the AICC office had not sent you a copy of Pant's resolution. (This has since been done). I was still more surprised that the resolution had not been brought to your notice till you came to Allahabad. At Tripuri, the air was thick with the rumour that the resolution had your fullest support. A statement to that effect also appeared in the daily press while we were at Tripuri.

Sixthly, I have not the slightest desire to stick to office, but I do not see any reason for resigning because I am ill. No President resigned when he was in prison for instance; I may tell you that great pressure is being brought to bear on me to resign. I am resisting because my resignation will mean a new phase in Congress politics which I want to avoid till the last. I have been attending to urgent AICC work during the last few days.

I shall write to you again tomorrow or the day after.⁵

I am progressing. I hope your blood-pressure will soon be down again.

With *pranams*,

Yours affectionately,

PS

This letter is not exactly a reply to yours, I have just jotted down the points which were in my mind and which I wanted to convey to you.

* From 24 March to 5 May 1939, the Mahatma and S.C. Bose exchanged 34 telegrams and 13 letters. These were released to the Press on 13 May and published in all the daily newspapers the next day.

¹ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 69, p. 80.

² *Ibid.*, appendix XII, pp. 465–68.

³ Sarat Chandra Bose (1889–1950); educated in Cuttack, Calcutta and England; joined the Calcutta High Court in 1913 and defended the accused in the Chittagong Armoury Raid case; member of the Congress Working Committee (1937–39) and leader of Congress Parliamentary Party in the Bengal Legislative Assembly; resigned from the Congress in 1946 and founded the Socialist Republican Party.

⁴ Bose had, at first, ruled out the resolution and adjourned the house for tea. But when the AICC. Subjects' Committee met, Bose announced that he would give preference to Pant's resolution as it was of extraordinary significance. He was, however, keen that the resolution be passed unanimously.

⁵ Gandhi claimed to have seen the resolution for the first time in Allahabad. 'The initiative', he wrote to Bose on 30 March, 'lies with you. I do not know how far you are fit to attend to national work. If you are not, I think you should adopt the only constitutional course open to you.'



66. Gandhi–Bose Correspondence: Bose to Gandhi, 31 March 1939

CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 449–54.

Jealgora
31 March 1939

My dear Mahatmaji,

I saw your telegram to Sunil which you sent in reply to his long telegram regarding my health. When you wired suggesting my going to Delhi, I thought it best to let the doctors speak out their mind on the subject. So Sunil wired you.

I have been pondering over the various points in your letter of the 24th instant to me (from the train) and your letter to Sarat of the same date and over the situation in general. It is really unfortunate for me that I fell ill at such a critical time. But events have so moved in rapid succession that I have not had a chance of quick recovery. Besides, both before Tripuri and after, I have not been treated in certain influential quarters (there is no reference to you at all in this—let me make it clear) with the consideration that was due to me. But there is no reason for me to resign on account of my illness. As I stated in my letter of yesterday (my second letter to you), no President, to my knowledge, resigned when he was in prison, even for a long time. It may be that I shall have to resign after all, but, if that takes place, it will be due to quite different reasons.

I think I said in my second letter that though pressure was being brought to bear on me to resign, I was resisting. My resignation would mean the beginning of a new phase in Congress politics which I want to avoid till the last. If we come to the parting of the ways, a bitter civil war will commence and—whatever be the upshot of it—the Congress will be weakened for some time to come and the benefit will be reaped by the British Government. It is in your hands to save the Congress and the country from the calamity. People who are bitterly opposed for various reasons to Sardar Patel and his group, still have confidence in you and believe that you can take a dispassionate and non-partisan view of things. To them you are a national figure—above parties and groups—and you can therefore, restore unity between the warring elements. If for any reason that confidence is shaken—which God forbid—and you are regarded as a partisan, then God help us and the Congress.

There is no doubt that there is today a wide gulf between the two parties (or blocs) in the Congress. But the gulf can yet be bridged—and that by you. I cannot say anything about the mentality of our political opponents. Tripuri has given us a very bad experience of them, but I can speak for our side. We are not vindictive and we do not nurse grievances. We are prepared to ‘forgive and forget’—as they say—and join hands once again for the sake of the common cause, viz., the political and economic emancipation of India. When I talk of ‘outside’, I exclude the official Congress Socialist Party. We discovered for the first time at Tripuri what a small following the official Congress Socialist Party had. The Congress Socialist Party has now split—the rank and file and several provincial branches having revolted against the official leaders, because of what is called their vacillating policy. A large section of the Congress Socialist Party will move with us in future, in spite of what the top leadership may do. If you have any doubts on this score, you have only to wait and see.

The letter of my brother Sarat to you shows that he is feeling very bitter. This, I presume, is due largely to his experiences at Tripuri, because he had no such feeling when he left Calcutta for Tripuri. Naturally, he knows more about the happenings at Tripuri than I do, because he could move about freely, meet people and obtain information. But though I was confined to bed, I got enough information from several independent sources regarding the attitude of responsible circles politically opposed to us, to make me feel thoroughly sick of the whole affair. I may say further

that when I left Tripuri, I felt such a loathing and disgust for Congress politics as I have not done for the last nineteen years. Thank God, I have got over that feeling now and have recovered my composure.

Jawahar in one of his letters (and possibly Press statements) remarked that the AICC office had deteriorated under my presidentship. I resent that remark as unfair and unjust. He did not perhaps realize that in trying to damn me, he has damned Kripalaniji and the entire staff. The office is in the hands of the secretary and his staff and if it deteriorates, it is they who are responsible for it. I am writing to Jawahar at length on this point. I am mentioning this to you because you have said something about the interim administration in your letter to Sarat. The only way in which we can help the office is to appoint a permanent secretary at once, even if there is delay in appointing the rest of the Working Committee. But if the Working Committee is going to be appointed soon, we need not appoint the General Secretary in advance.

I shall be grateful if you could let me know your reaction to Pant's resolution. You are in this advantageous position, that you can take a dispassionate view of things provided, of course, you get to know the whole story of Tripuri. Judging from the papers, most of the people who have seen you so far seem to belong to one school—namely, those who supported Pant's resolution. But that does not matter. You can easily assess things at their proper value, regardless of the persons who visit you. You can easily imagine my own view of Pant's resolution. But my personal feelings do not matter to public considerations. As I have said in a previous letter, whatever one may think of Pant's resolution from the purely constitutional point of view, since it has been passed by the Congress I feel bound by it. Now, do you regard that resolution as one of no-confidence in me and do you feel that I should resign in consequence thereof? Your view in this matter will influence me considerably.

Perhaps, you are aware that at Tripuri it was given out by those who were canvassing in support of Pant's resolution that telephonic conversation had taken place with Rajkot and that that resolution had your full support. A report to that effect appeared in the daily press also. It was further given out in private conversation that nothing short of that resolution in its entirety would satisfy either you or your orthodox followers. Personally, I did not and do not believe in such reports, but they undoubtedly had their vote-catching value. When Pant's resolution was shown to me for the first time by Sardar Patel, I suggested to him (Rajen Babu and Maulana Azad were also there at the time) that if certain changes were made, the resolution in the amended form would be passed by the Congress unanimously. The amended form of the resolution was also sent to Sardar Patel, but there was no response from his side. Their attitude seemed to be not a word, not a comma, should be changed. I suppose Rajkumari Amrit Kaur has handed over to you the amended form of the resolution. If the object of Pant's resolution was to reiterate faith in your principles and your leadership and guidance, that was provided in the amended resolution, but if the object was to avenge the result of the presidential election, then of course the amended resolution did not suffice. Personally, I do not see how Pant's resolution has enhanced your prestige, influence and authority. One hundred and thirty five votes were cast against you in the Subjects Committee, and in the Open Session, whatever interested parties may say, my information from various independent sources is to the effect that, in spite of the neutrality of the Congress Socialist Party, at least 800 votes, if not more, out of about 2,300 were (would have been?) cast against you. And if the Congress Socialist Party had voted as they did in the Subjects Committee, then the resolution would have been defeated. In any case, the result of the voting would have been problematical. With slight changes in the resolution not one vote would have been cast against the resolution and your leadership would have had the unanimous support of all Congressmen. Your prestige before the British Government and before the whole world would have gone up like a shot. Instead, your

name and prestige were exploited by those who wanted to wreak vengeance on us. Consequently, instead of enhancing your prestige and influence, they have dragged it down to an unimaginable depth—for the whole world not knows that though you or your followers managed to get a majority at Tripuri, there is in existence a powerful opposition. If matters are allowed to drift, this opposition is bound to gain in strength and in volume. What is the future of a party that is deprived of radical, youthful and progressive elements? The future is similar to that of the Liberal Party of Great Britain.

I have said enough to acquaint you with my reaction to Pant's resolution. I shall now be grateful if you kindly let me know what your reaction is. Do you approve of Pant's resolution, or should you rather have seen it passed unanimously in an amended form on the lines that we had suggested?

There is one other matter to which I shall refer in this letter—that is the question of our programme. I submitted my views to you on February 15, at Wardha. What has happened since then has served to confirm my views, to justify my prediction. For months I have been telling friends that there would be a crisis in Europe in spring which would continue till summer. The international situation as well as our own position at home, convinced me, nearly eight months ago, that the time had come for us to force the issue of *purna swaraj*. Unfortunately for us and for the country, you do not share our optimism. You are obsessed with the idea of corruption within the Congress. Moreover, the bogey of violence alarms you. Though I am at one with you in your determination to root out corruption within the Congress, I do not think that, taking India as a whole, there is more corruption today than before and, so far as violence is concerned I feel sure there is far less of it today than before. Previously, Bengal, the Punjab and the United Provinces could have been regarded as the hope of organized revolutionary violence. Today there is much more of the spirit of non-violence there. And, speaking for Bengal, I can say with full authority that the province was never more non-violent during the last 30 years than today. For these and other reasons we should lose no time in placing our National Demand before the British Government in the form of an ultimatum. The idea of ultimatum does not appeal to you or to Pandit Jawaharlal. But in all your political life, you have given any number of ultimatums to the authorities and have advanced the public cause thereby. The other day at Rajkot you did the same thing. What objection can there be, therefore, to submitting our national demand in the form of an Ultimatum? If you do so and prepare for the coming struggle simultaneously, I am sure that we shall be able to win *purna swaraj* very soon. The British Government will either respond to our demand without a fight—or, if the struggle does not take place, in our present circumstances it cannot be a long-drawn one. I am so confident, and so optimistic on this point, that I feel that if we take courage in both hands and go ahead, we shall have swaraj inside of 18 months at the most.

I feel so strongly on this point that I am prepared to make any sacrifice in this connection. If you take up the struggle, I shall most gladly help you to the best of my ability. If you feel that the Congress would be able to fight better with another President, I shall gladly step aside. If you feel that the Congress will be able to fight more effectively with a Working Committee of your choice, I shall gladly fall in line with your wishes. All that I want is that you and the Congress should, in this critical hour, stand up and resume the struggle for swaraj. If self-effacement will further the national cause, I assure you most solemnly that I am prepared to efface myself completely. I think I love my country sufficiently to be able to do this.

Pardon me for saying that the way you have been recently conducting the State's People's struggle does not appeal to me. You risked your precious and valuable life for Rajkot and, while fighting for the Rajkot people, you suspended the struggle in all other States. Why should you do so? There are six hundred and odd States in India and, among them, Rajkot is a tiny one. It would

not be an exaggeration to call the Rajkot struggle a flea-bite. Why should we not fight simultaneously all over the country and have a comprehensive plan for the purpose? This is what millions of your countrymen think, though out of personal reverence for you, they may not say so openly.

In conclusion, I may say that many people like myself cannot enthuse over the terms of the Rajkot settlement. We, as well as the Nationalist Press, have called it a great victory but how much have we gained? Sir Maurice Gwyer is neither our man nor is he an independent agent. He is a Government man. What point is there in making him the umpire? We are hoping that his verdict will be in our favour. But supposing he declares against us, what will be our position? Moreover, Sir Maurice Gwyer is a part and parcel of the Federal Scheme we have resolved to reject. In the case of a conflict with the British Government, if we decide to have a High Court Judge or a Sessions Judge as umpire, we can always have a settlement with the British Government. But what shall we gain from such a settlement? Further there are many people who fail to understand why after the interview with the Viceroy, you should be waiting in Delhi. Perhaps, in view of your weak health a rest was necessary before undertaking another long journey. But to the British Government and its supporters it may appear as if you are attaching too much importance to the Federal Chief Justice and thereby enhancing his prestige.

My letter has become too long, so I must stop here. If I have said anything which appears to you to be erroneous, I hope you will pardon me. I know you always like people to speak frankly and openly. That is what was emboldened me in writing this frank and long letter.

I have been progressing steadily, though slowly. I do hope this will find you better and your blood-pressure much lower.

Pranams.

II APRIL-JUNE

67. Gandhi-Bose Correspondence: Gandhi to Bose, 2 April 1939

CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 96-98.

My dear Subhas,

I have yours of March 31, as also the previous one. You are quite frank and I like your letters for the clear enunciation of your views.

The views you express seem to me to be so diametrically opposed to those of the others and my own that I do not see any possibility of bridging them. I think that each school of thought should be able to put forth its views before the country without any mixture. And if this is honestly done, I do not see why there should be any bitterness, ending in civil war.

What is wrong is not the differences between us but loss of mutual respect and trust. This will be remedied by time, which is the best healer. If there is real non-violence in us, there can be no civil war, much less bitterness.

Taking all things into consideration, I am of opinion that you should at once form your own Cabinet fully representing your views, formulate your programme definitely and put it before the forthcoming AICC. If the committee accepts the programme, all will be plain-sailing and you should be enabled to prosecute it unhampered by the minority. If, on the other hand, your programme is not accepted you should resign and let the committee choose its President. And you will be free to educate the country along your own lines. I tender this advice irrespective of Pandit Pant's resolution.

Now for your questions. When Pandit Pant's resolution was produced, I was on my bed. Mathuradas, who happened to be in Rajkot that day, one morning brought me the message that

there was to be a resolution expressing confidence in the old horses. I had not the text before me. I said it would be good so far as it went, for I had been told at Segaoon that your election was not so much confidence in you as censure of the old horses, especially the Sardar. After this, I saw the actual text only in Allahabad when I went to see the Maulana Saheb.

My prestige does not count. It has no independent value of its own. When my motive is suspected or my policy or programme rejected by the country, the prestige must go. India will rise or fall by the quality of the sum total of the acts of her many millions. Individuals, however, high they may be, are of no account except in so far as they represent the many millions. Therefore, let us rule it out of consideration.

I wholly dissent from your view that the country has been never as non-violent as now. I smell violence in the air I breathe. But the violence has put on a subtle form. Our mutual distrust is a bad form of violence. The widening gulf between Hindus and Mussalmans points to the same thing. I can give further illustrations.

We seem to differ as to the amount of corruption in the Congress. My impression is that it is on the increase. I have been pleading for the past many months for a thorough scrutiny.

In these circumstances, I see no atmosphere for non-violent mass action. An ultimatum without an effective sanction is worse than useless.

But, as I have told you, I am an old man, perhaps growing timid and over-cautious, and you have youth before you and reckless optimism born of youth. I hope you are right and I am wrong. I have the firm belief that the Congress, as it is today, cannot deliver the goods, cannot offer civil disobedience worth the name. Therefore, if your prognosis is right, I am a back number and played out as the generalissimo of satyagraha.

I am glad you have mentioned the little Rajkot affair. It brings into prominent relief the different angles from which we look at things. I have nothing to repent of in the steps I have taken in connection with it. I feel that it has great national importance. I have not stopped civil disobedience in the other States for the sake of Rajkot. But Rajkot opened my eyes; it showed me the way. I am not in Delhi for my health. I am reluctantly in Delhi, awaiting the Chief Justice's decision. I hold it to be my duty to be in Delhi till the steps to be taken, in due fulfillment of the Viceroy's declaration in his last wire to me, were finally taken. I may not run any risk. If I invited the Paramount Power to do its duty, I was bound to be in Delhi to see that the duty was fully performed. I saw nothing wrong in the Chief Justice being appointed the interpreter of the document whose meaning was put in doubt by the Thakore Saheb. By the way, Sir Maurice examines the document not in his capacity as Chief Justice but as a trained Jurist, trusted by the Viceroy. By accepting the Viceroy's nominee as judge, I fancy I have shown both wisdom and grace and, what is more important, I have increased the Vice-regal responsibility in the matter.

Though we have discussed sharp differences of opinion between us, I am quite sure that our private relations will not suffer in the least. If they are from the heart, as I believe they are, they will bear the strain of these differences.

Love.

Bapu

68. Gandhi-Bose Correspondence: Bose to Gandhi

CWMG, Vol. 69, 6 April 1939, pp. 455-60.

My dear Mahatmaji,

In one of your letter to Majdada, my brother Sarat, you suggested a heart-to-heart talk between the leaders of both parties with a view to clearing the ground for united action in future. I think it

is a magnificent idea, and I am fully prepared to do my best in this matter, regardless of what has happened in the past. Will you kindly let me know if you would like me to do anything in this behalf and if so, what? Personally, I feel that your influence and personality could achieve much in this endeavour to bring about unity. Will you not make one last supreme effort to bring everybody together before we give up all hope of unity? I would beg of you once again to remember in what light the country still regards you. You are not a partisan and people, therefore, still look up to you to bring together all the warring elements.

I have been pondering deeply over the advice you have given me regarding the formation of the Working Committee. I feel that your advice is a counsel of despair. It destroys all hope of unity. It will not save the Congress from a split—on the contrary, it will make the path safe for such a contingency. To advise a homogeneous Cabinet in the present circumstances will mean advising the parties to part company now. Is that not a terrible responsibility? Do you feel quite sure that joint work is impossible? On our side we do not think so. We are prepared to do our best to ‘forgive and forget’ and join hands for the sake of the common cause and we can look up to bring about an honourable compromise. I have already written and spoken to you that the composition of the Congress being what it is—and there being no possibility in the immediate future of any remarkable change—the best course would be to have a composite Cabinet in which all groups would be represented, as far as possible.

I understand that you are against this idea of a composite Cabinet. Is your opposition due to grounds of principle (viz., joint work is impossible in your view), or is it because you feel that the ‘Gandhi-ites’ (I am using this expression in the absence of anything better, and you will please pardon me for doing so) should have a larger representation on the Cabinet? In the latter case, please let me know, so that I may have an opportunity of reconsidering the matter. In the former case, please reconsider the advice you have already tendered in the light of what I am submitting in this letter. At Haripura, when I suggested inviting the socialists to serve on the Cabinet, you told me distinctly that you were in favour of my doing so. Has the situation changed so materially since then as to induce you to insist on a homogenous Cabinet?

You have referred in your letters to the two parties being so ‘diametrically opposed’. You have not amplified the point and it is not clear if the position you refer to is based on programme or on personal relations. Personal relations are in my view a passing phenomenon. We may quarrel and fight, but we can also shake hands and make up our differences. Take, for instance, the Swarajist episode in recent Congress history. As far as I am aware, after a period of opposition the relations between Deshbandhu and Pandit Motilalji with yourself became as sweet as humanly possible. In Great Britain, the major parties can always join hands and work on the same Cabinet when an emergency arises. In Continental countries like France every Cabinet is normally a composite Cabinet. Are we less patriotic than Britishers and Frenchmen? If we are not, then why cannot we have composite Cabinets functioning effectively?

If you think that your opposition is based on programme, etc., rather than on personal considerations, I should like very much to have your view in this matter. Wherein do you think that our programmes differ, and that too so fundamentally, that joint action is not possible? I know that we have certain differences—but, as I wrote to my ex-colleagues of the Working Committee in reply to their letter of resignation, our points of agreement are, in my view, more numerous than our points of difference. I still adhere to this view—Tripuri notwithstanding.

You have said in one of your letters in connection with my idea of an ultimatum on the issue of swaraj that there is no atmosphere for non-violent mass action. But did you not have non-violent mass action in Rajkot? Are you not having it in some other States also? These States’ Peoples are comparatively untrained in the practice of satyagraha. We in British India can claim

more experience and training—comparatively speaking at least. If the States' peoples can be permitted to resort to satyagraha in their struggle for civil liberty and responsible Government, why not we of British India?

Now take the National Demand resolution passed at the Tripuri Congress with the support of the Gandhi-ites. Though it has beautifully vague phrases and several pious platitudes, it has, in a certain sense, much in common with my idea of an ultimatum and preparing for the coming struggle. Now, do you approve of this resolution? If you do, then why cannot you go to a step further and accept my plan?

I shall now come to Pandit Pant's resolution. The important part of it (last portion, I mean) contains two points: Firstly, the Working Committee must command your confidence—implicit confidence. Secondly, it must be formed in accordance with your wishes. If you advise a homogenous Cabinet, and such a Cabinet is formed, one could perhaps say that it has been formed 'in accordance with your wishes.' But could it be claimed that it commands your confidence? Will it be open to me to get up at the meeting of the AICC and tell the members that you have advised the formation of a homogenous Cabinet and that the new Cabinet commands your confidence? On the other hand, if you advised the formation of a Cabinet which does not command your confidence, will you be giving effect to the Pant resolution—will you be doing the right thing, from your point of view? I would beg of you to consider this aspect of the question. If you take cognizance of the Pant resolution, you will not only have to communicate your wishes regarding the new Working Committee, but you will, at the same time, have to advise the formation of such a Committee as will command your confidence.

You have not yet said anything as to the merits of the Pant resolution. Do you approve of it? Or would you rather have had a unanimously passed resolution, more or less on the lines suggested by us which would reiterate faith in your principles and confidence in your guidance, without the controversial clauses? Then, again, what is the President's position regarding appointing the Working Committee after this resolution was passed? I am again asking this question because the present constitution is practically your handwork and your opinion in the matter will carry great weight with me. There is another question, in this connection, which I have been asking you. Do you regard this resolution as one of no-confidence in me? If so, I shall resign at once and that too unconditionally. Some papers have criticized this question of mine in my Press statement on the ground that I should decide for myself what the significance of the resolution is. I have sense enough to give my own interpretation, but there are occasions when personal interpretations would not be one's sole guide. Speaking quite frankly, I feel that my stand has been justified by the result of the Presidential election. I have now no desire whatsoever to stick to office for one day, unless I can thereby advance the public cause, as I understand it. The hesitation or the delay that has arisen on my side is because it is not so easy to decide. Among my supporters there are two schools of thought one holding that I should strive to the last to maintain unity; the other holding that I should break off negotiations at once, as being a hopeless effort, and tender my resignation. The latter have been bringing great pressure to bear on me, but I am resisting. I want to be clear before my own conscience that I have striven till the last to preserve unity within our ranks. Moreover, I know what my resignation will mean in the present circumstances and what its consequences will be. I should add here that the first school—viz., those who want me to exhaust all possibility of a compromise—believe that you will be able to take a thoroughly non-partisan view of things and thereby bring the two parties together.

I must explain further why I say that I shall resign automatically if you feel that Pant's resolution signifies no-confidence. You know very well that I do not follow you blindly in all that you say or believe, as so many of my countrymen do. Why then should I resign if your opinion is that the

resolution signifies no-confidence? The reason is plain and simple. I feel it as galling to my conscience to hold on to office if the greatest personality in India today feels—though he may not say so openly—that the passing of the resolution should automatically have brought in my resignation. This attitude is perhaps dictated more by personal regard for you and your opinion in this matter.

Perhaps, as some papers suggest, you have an idea that the Old Guard should be put back into office. In that event I would beg of you to come back to active politics, become a four-anna Congress member and assume direct charge of the Working Committee. Pardon me for saying so, and I say this without meaning offence to anybody—there is a world of difference between yourself and your lieutenants, even your chosen lieutenants. There are people who will do anything for you—but not for them. Will you believe me when I say that at the Presidential election even some Gandhi-ites in several provinces voted for me against the direction of the Old Guard? If your personality is not dragged into the picture, I shall continue to have their support—the Old Guard notwithstanding.

At Tripuri, the Old Guard cleverly dropped out of the picture and more cleverly pitted me against you. (But there was no quarrel between yourself and myself). Afterwards they said that Tripuri was a great victory for them and a defeat for me. The fact of the matter is that it was neither a victory for them nor a defeat for me. It was a victory for you (without any cause of a fight with you at all) but a Pyrrhic victory—a victory purchased by a certain loss of prestige.

But I am digressing. I wanted to appeal to you to come forward and directly and openly conduct the affairs of the Congress. This will simplify matters. Much of the opposition against the Old Guard—and opposition there certainly is—will automatically vanish.

If you cannot do this, then I have an alternative suggestion to make. Please resume the national struggle for independence, as we have been demanding, and begin by delivering the ultimatum to the British Government. In that event, we shall all gladly retire from our official positions, if you so desire. We shall gladly hand over these positions to whomsoever you like or trust. But only on one condition—the fight for independence must be resumed. People like myself feel that today we have an opportunity which is rare in the lifetime of a nation. For that reason we are prepared to make any sacrifice that will help the resumption of the fight.

If till the last you insist that a composite Cabinet is unworkable and a homogeneous Cabinet is the only alternative before us and if you want me to form a Cabinet of my choice, I would earnestly request you to give me your vote of confidence till the next Congress. If, in the mean time, we fail to justify ourselves by our service and suffering, we shall stand condemned before the Congress and we shall naturally and quite properly be kicked out of office. Your vote of confidence will mean the vote of confidence of the AICC in the present circumstances. If you do not give us your vote of confidence—but at the same time ask us to form a homogeneous Cabinet—you will not be given effect to Pant's resolution.

Once again I would beg of you to let me know if your opposition to a composite Cabinet is due to considerations of principle or to the fact that you should like the Old Guard to have a larger representation on the Cabinet than I suggested in my first letter to you, dated the 25th March.

Before I close this letter, I shall refer to one or two personal things. You have remarked in one letter that you hope that, whatever happens, 'our private relations will not suffer'. I cherish this hope with all my heart. May I say in this connection that if there is anything in life on which I pride myself, it is this that I am the son of a gentleman and as such am a gentleman? Deshbandhu Das often used to tell us, 'Life is larger than Politics.' That lesson I have learnt from him. I shall not remain in the political field one single day if by doing so I shall fall from the standards of gentlemanliness, which are so deeply ingrained in my mind from infancy and which I feel are in

my very blood. I have no means of knowing how you view me as a man—in a way, you have seen so little of me. And my political opponents have carried so many tales against me to you. In recent months I have come to know that for the last few months I have been the victim of a subtle but sinister propaganda carried on against me from mouth to mouth. I would have brought this matter to your notice long ago, but I could not get sufficiently tangible evidence of what was being said and by whom. Latterly, I have come to know much as to what has been said, though I am still in the dark as to who exactly the propagandists are.

Once again I have digressed. In a letter you expressed the hope that in whatever I did, I would 'be guided by God'. Believe me, Mahatmaji, all these days I have been praying for only one thing, viz., for light as to the path which would be best for my country and my country's freedom. I have asked for strength and inspiration to completely efface myself—should the need and occasion arise. It is my firm conviction that a nation can live only if the individuals composing it be ready to die for its sake whenever it is necessary. This moral (or spiritual) *hara-kiri* is not an easy thing. But may God grant me the strength to face it whenever the country's interests demand it.

I hope you will maintain your improvement. I am progressing steadily.

With respectful *pranams*.

69. Gandhi–Bose Correspondence: Gandhi to Bose

CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 125–27, 10 April 1939.

My dear Subhas,

Your letter of 6th instance has been redirected here.

I suggested a meeting of the foes to have it out among themselves without any reservation. But so much has happened since that I do not know if it is worth while. They will only swear at one another and bitterness will become more bitter. The gulf is too wide, suspicions too deep. I see no way of closing the ranks. The only way seems to me to recognize the differences and let each group work in its own manner.

I feel myself utterly incompetent to bring the warring elements together for joint work. I should hope that they can work out their policies with becoming dignity. If they do so it will be well with the country.

Pandit Pant's resolution I cannot interpret. The more I study it the more I dislike it. The framers meant well. But it does not answer the present difficulty. You should, therefore, give it your own interpretation and act accordingly, without the slightest hesitation.

I cannot, will not, impose a Cabinet on you. You must not have one imposed on you, nor can I guarantee approval by AICC of your Cabinet and policy. It would amount to suppression. Let the members exercise their own judgment. If you do not get the vote, lead the opposition till you have converted the majority.

Do you know that I have stopped civil disobedience wherever I have influence? Travancore and Jaipur are glaring examples. Even Rajkot I had stopped before I came here. I repeat that I breathe violence in the air. I see no atmosphere for non-violent action. Is not the lesson of Ramdurg enough for you? In my opinion it has done immense injury to the cause. It was, so far as I can see, premeditated. Congressmen are responsible for it as they were in Ranpur. Do you not see that we two honestly see the same thing differently and even draw opposite conclusions? How can we meet on the political platform? Let us agree to differ there and let us meet on the social, moral and municipal platform. I cannot add the economic, for we have discovered our differences on that platform also.

My conviction is that working along our lines, in our own way, we shall serve the country better than by the different groups seeking to work a common policy and common programme forged out of irreconcilable elements.

I sent you wires from Delhi about my utter inability to go to Dhanbad. Rajkot I dare not neglect.

I am well. Bp is down with malignant malaria. This is the fifth day. I brought her with me when she had already commenced it.

I wish you will conserve your health by taking decisive action, leaving the result to God. Your reference to your father is touching. I had the pleasure of meeting him.

I forget one thing. Nobody put me up against you. What I told you in Segaon was based on my own personal observations. You are wrong if you think that you have a single personal enemy among the Old Guard.

70.(a) Position of Hindu Women

Editorial, *Searchlight*, 11 April 1939.

11 April 1939

Two days—Tuesday and Wednesday last—of the Central Assembly were devoted to discussions regarding the position of women, Hindu women particularly. The whole of Tuesday was taken up by two speeches only—those of Doctor Deshmukh and Sir N.N. Sircar on the former's Bill on Hindu women's right to divorce—and Wednesday saw a discussion on Mr Hedge's resolution—and on the amendment of Dr Deshmukh thereto—recommending the appointment of a committee to examine and report on the present position of women under the existing laws with special reference to their rights and their disabilities with regard to the ownership and disposal of property, guardianship over children, rights of maintenance, rights in respect of joint family property, rights of inheritance and succession and marital rights, Dr Deshmukh's Bill related to one particular problem—namely the question of the granting of right to Hindu women to divorce their husbands under certain conditions. Mr Hedge's resolution was much more comprehensive not only because it ought to cover many more matters and questions than the one single question of divorce but also because it applied to women of all religions, not to Hindu women only. The debate on both days revealed the wide divergence of opinion that exists on the subject of social reforms touching the position of women. Dr Deshmukh's Bill was vigorously opposed by Sir N.N. Sircar who explained Government's attitude in the matter. While Dr Deshmukh had put in a strong plea for the grant of the right of divorce to Hindu women, describing the miserable plight in which they were placed by their husbands taking another way, or when the husband concerned was impotent or changed his religion or was absent, Sir N.N. Sircar argued vehemently that the Bill was not comprehensive enough, that it had left out many important questions, that it would prove more harmful than beneficial and that there was no large public opinion behind it. A perusal of the two speeches shows that there were points in both the speeches for serious consideration. That much misery is being heaped on the devoted heads of many a Hindu woman by the action of their husbands is undoubted but whether the grant of the right of divorce to them under the conditions mentioned in the Bill was enough to solve their difficulties is problematic. And Dr Deshmukh's Bill was full of many lacunae as Sir Nripendra showed. So even apart from the view-point of Hindu orthodoxy, the Bill was not likely to receive much support and Government's opposition sealed its fate completely.

Mr Hedge's resolution also could not get the general support of the House. The Muslims were opposed to it, as for them the last word in regard to these matters have been said in the Holy

Quran and they would not allow any interference to take place in religious or quasi-religious matters. The Parsis would not tolerate it either as was apparent for the speech of Sir Cowasji Jehangir. No Christian member spoke but one can well take it that the Christians were also opposed to the resolution which, as it was worded, applied to women of all religions. Consequently an amendment was moved by Dr Deshmukh—apparently with the consent of the Government spokesmen since Sir Nripen is said to have himself drafted the amendment—restricting the application of the resolution to the case only of Hindu women and to virtually one question only, namely, the reforms necessary for improving the right of Hindu women to residence and maintenance and legislative measures necessary to give effect to such reforms. Perhaps no women require such reforms more urgently than Hindu women for the Shastras—more particularly their modern interpretations—and actual practice have both combined to make their lot, in many repeat, an extremely unenviable one. They have virtually no right to any property and even their right to maintenance is, in many cases, circumvented and frustrated in various ways by unscrupulous relatives. We do not know whether the limited scope of the enquiry provided by the amendment, which was accepted by the Assembly, will be able to remove their ills—at any rate, to any great extent. But an enquiry of the kind is necessary and we have no doubt that some good at least will result therefrom. The improvement of Hindu women's position, as indeed the position of women of any other religion—depends ultimately upon the awakening of the social conscience. To that end, therefore, a vigorous propaganda is necessary. If those who are anxious to improve their lot launch such a propaganda and push it on energetically much more good is likely to result than from the mere enactment of a legislative measure. Some propaganda is going on no doubt at present but it is not enough and much of it is also not on the right lines for there is a tendency too much to ape the west and to introduce thoughtlessly into the Indian social system things which may suit western social conditions and ideas very well but which may not necessarily be productive of beneficial results here. Reforms have to be made but they must be made after due deliberation and a careful consideration of all relevant factors. That some women support certain measures need not necessarily imply that those measures are really good even for women generally. There is a section of women, as there is a section of men, also whose sense of modernity will not be satisfied unless they are free, every moment of their life, to do what they like. They may have the fullest liberty no doubt—and also equality with men—but nothing should be done which is likely to encourage license whether among men or among women. Questions like divorce, therefore, need much careful thinking, weighing of the pros and cons, and examination of the underlying motives and impulses. There must be no hurry in such matters.

(b) Need of Education Among Women

Editorial, *Searchlight*, 9 May 1939.

The necessity of education and unity among women for their progress was emphasized by Mrs Gandhi in reply to an address presented to her last evening of the women of Bihar on the occasion of the Conference of Bihar women held here under her presidentship.

There was a large gathering of ladies representing almost all parts of the province.

Srimati Rajkumari Amrit Kaur addressing the gathering said that women held the key of the nation. They should bring up their children in such a way that they might be good citizens of the country in future.

Mrs Sucheta Kripalani¹ said that women should be well up in domestic sciences so that they might function efficiently and make happy home.

Srimati Saraswati Devi, MLA exhorted the women to stand on their own legs as in their firmness lay their own salvation. She appealed to Congress leaders and Congress Ministers to give more thought to the condition of women.

Resolutions

The conference unanimously passed several resolutions requesting the Government to provide for a University for women to impart education to them in all lines so that they might be prepared to justify their existence in this universe and not be only a drag on men. The University should provide for technical education as well so that students coming out of it might be able to earn their livelihood.

Another resolution referred to the increase of institutions for providing female education in the province which was almost negligible. It was decided by a resolution that a corps of Lady Volunteers for the coming session of the Indian National Congress in Bihar be organized and trained.

Government were requested to consider the cases of women in making nomination to Local Bodies in the province.

It was interesting to note that the President could not deliver her address as the village women in hundreds rushed to the dais and wanted to touch her feet.

¹ Sucheta Kripalani (1908–74); born at Ambala, Punjab (now in Haryana); educated at Delhi and Punjab University; Secretary, Foreign Affairs Department as well as women's section of Indian National Congress, 1934–41; participated in Quit India movement, 1942; member, Constituent Assembly, 1946–48; UP Legislative Assembly, 1948–50 and 1960–67; Congress Working Committee, 1948–51; Provisional Parliament, 1950–52, and Lok Sabha, 1952–57, 1957–60 and 1967–70; Minister of Labour, Community Development and Industry, UP Government, 1960–62; Chief Minister, UP, 1962–67.

71. Struggle for Freedom: Women's Role

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 8 May 1939.

Brindaban
7 May 1939.

That there was the immediate necessity for a university for girls in Bihar and that the Provincial Government should establish such an institution as early as possible, was the substance of an important resolution passed at a ladies meeting held here last night. Mrs Kasturba Gandhi presiding.

Another resolution urging for raising a woman volunteer corps and requesting the women of India to prepare themselves for the next struggle for emancipation was also adopted at the meeting.

Mrs Kasturba Gandhi had a difficult but pleasant time with women folk who pushed one another and touched her feet and asked her to come to their place again.

Mrs Kasturba in a moving speech asked the audience to prepare for the next fight and have clean body, mind and soul.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur said that in every age and clime women played a heroic part in the nation's struggle for freedom. She urged them to join the struggle for Swaraj.

She also reminded them that the destiny of India lay in the hands of her woman. Mothers were vanguards of brave fighters.

Two welcome addresses were presented to Mrs Kasturba Gandhi, flourishing her as an example of Indian womanhood and wishing her a prosperous future to serve the nation.

72. False Cry 'Islam in Danger': Ahrar Leader's Speech at Jullundhur

Tribune, 21 April 1939.

Jullundhur
19 April 1939

'While we are confident of a solid united front organizing itself under the Congress banner to resist the uncalled-for and unwanted Army Recruitment Bill, we must be alive to the danger created by the reactionary elements under the cloak of religion with the object of strengthening the hold of imperialism on our country and perpetuating our slavery', said Chaudhri Afzal Haq, a prominent Ahrar leader, addressing a largely attended public meeting held here last night. Maulana Habibur Rahman of Ludhiana presided.

The speaker continued that in most of the Provinces the anti-national elements, namely, the Khan Bahadurs, Rai Bahadurs, Knights and Nawabs had been swept away by the will of the people. Here in this province they had put on the veil of the Muslim League merely to deceive the innocent people and wean them away from the Congress by raising false cry of 'Islam in danger'. While the policy of British Imperialism to annihilate their co-religionists in Palestine and Waziristan was in full swing, the Muslim Leaguers swore unflinching loyalty by supporting the Army Recruitment Bill in the Central Assembly and also assuring the agents of British Imperialism of supplying recruits in the event of a world war breaking out. He was at a loss to understand the dual policy of the Muslim Leaguers in posing as the sole protectors of Islam on one side and supporting the British rule in India on the other. He warned his co-religionists against the poisonous propaganda of the so-called protectors of Islamic culture and civilization and exhorted them to stand by the Congress the largest national organization struggling for political independence. He attributed the growing unrest in the Asiatic countries to the continued slavery of India and observed that the Ahrar Party would not be found wanting in the struggle for the freedom of the country.

Concluding he appealed to the audience to support the Congress and Ahrar candidates at the forthcoming Municipal election.

73. Satyamurty Against 'Dual Loyalty': Plans to Ginger Up Congress for Freedom's Struggle

Bombay Chronicle, 21 April 1939.

21 April 1939

Three suggestions for rendering the Congress a more effective organization so that it could conduct the nation's battle for freedom with greater success and lead India to her goal of "Purna Swaraj" within the shortest possible time, were made by Mr S. Satyamurty, MLA (Central), at a public lecture in the Congress House this evening. Mr Bhulabhai Desai presided.

The first and most important suggestion was for the laying down of a restrictive provision in the Congress constitution that no member of the Congress should be allowed to be associated with any other political organization.

'A country that is struggling for its freedom' said Mr Satyamurty 'cannot afford the luxury of more than one political organization. It cannot afford to talk of ideological differences.'

'I maintain' declared Mr Satyamurty 'that the Congress provides the most democratic platform for the most hot headed among us. Let us all march forward as disciplined soldiers of the Congress under the lead of Mahatma Gandhi than whom India cannot have a greater leader.'

The second suggestion made by Mr Satyamurty was in the direction of eradicating corruption in Congress elections. He urged that no Congressman should be allowed to exercise franchise, unless he had been on the Congress rolls for at least three years. Thirdly, he urged the inclusion of a provision that only those who had Congress work to their credit must be allowed to stand for elections.

The Congress organization, said Mr Satyamurty, had been progressing from success to success. Its latest success had been in the civic elections of Bombay. He wished to congratulate the citizens for helping the Congress to secure a majority in the Corporation.

The useful work which the Congress Ministries had been putting in the eight provinces had definitely been in the direction of fulfilling the pledges given to the electorate. Mr Satyamurty particularly referred to the Bombay Ministry and said that he sincerely wished to congratulate them on their excellent work.

‘What has the Congress Government in Bombay not done?’ asked the speaker with enthusiasm; ‘The momentous step it took in restoring the forfeited lands is a gesture of incalculable political value. The Government’s efforts in the direction of liquidating illiteracy, providing for rural development and debt relief and more than all the courageous decision it has taken to root out the evil of drink in the city of Bombay cannot but evoke the admiration of all who have the interests of the country at heart.’

Vested interests and communalists were the two enemies, continued the speaker, against which the Congress had put up a fight.

‘The Congress which could not be cowed down by the mighty British Government is not going to be nervous about the threats from vested interests’ declared the speaker who characterized the threat of satyagraha against prohibition as ‘Duragraha.’ To practise non-cooperation against a democratic Government, said Mr Satyamurty, was a negation of the democratic principle. The Congress was prepared to take the verdict of the electorate on every action. Such of the vested interests who had grievances against the Congress Ministries could approach the electorate and ask the voters to judge the Congress Ministerial actions.

The communalists, said Mr Satyamurty, had always been raising the cry that the Congress Ministries were oppressing the minorities. There was absolutely no truth in this allegation.

‘If their grievances was real’ asked Mr Satyamurty ‘why have they not been going to Governors for protection of their rights? How is it that Governors have been silent all along?’

The communalists very often tended to be dangerous, continued the speaker, because they addressed meetings ‘with their coats off’ and incited people to violence. It was the duty of the Government to deal with such communalists according to law. Mr Satyamurty congratulated the Home Minister of Bombay for taking stern action against rowdies by rounding them up during communal disturbances. Abolition of separate electorates, opined the speaker, would go a long way in establishing communal harmony. The need of the hour, therefore, was to create public opinion against separate electorates.

Referring to the work of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly, Mr Satyamurty said that under the splendid leadership of Mr Bhulabhai Desai, the party had been able to win 41 out of 46 divisions. The Congress was sure of success at the center during the next elections.

Referring to the formation of the Congress Working Committee, the speaker said that it would be in the interests of the nation to have a homogeneous Cabinet.

The Congress attitude towards war if and when it broke out was clear. India was not going to be a party to an Imperialistic war.



74. Congress Appeal for Enrolment

Leader, 23 April 1939.*Kanpur*
21 April 1939

An appeal has been made by Mr Hamid Khan, Secretary, city Congress committee, to the citizens to enroll themselves as members of the Congress.¹ Increased significance attaches today, he says, to Congress membership as it rules over eight provinces, a thing which has been achieved by the increased power conferred on it by Congress members. Even then the Congress does not possess as much power as it requires for fighting against the enemy.

Last year the enrolment for the whole province was 15,00,000 and for the city of Kanpur 22,000. This resulted in increased power of the Congress both in the city and the province. The appeal is particularly addressed to the workers, the middle class, and the business section of the community that they should join the Congress in large numbers lest their remissness should result in weakening the hand of the provincial government.

Kanpur District Students' Conference

The Cawnpore District Students' Conference will be held on September 10 and 11 with Prof. Humayun Kabir,² MLC (Bengal), in the chair. Arrangements are being made to hold cultural and literacy conferences at the same time. Mrs Sarojini Naidu,³ Acharya Narendra Dev, Dr Z.A. Ahmad and K.M. Ashraf⁴ are among those invited. Sir Stafford Cripps,⁵ Mr R. Sorensen,⁶ MP, Prof. Harold J. Laski⁷ and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru have sent their messages of goodwill.

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru visited Kanpur on 9 April 1939 when he addressed the Kanpur District Political Conference at Maitha and, again on 21 May. On his first visit the name of the Congress volunteer corps was changed from Kaumi Sena Dal to Kaumi Seva Dal by the PCC. For his speeches, see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 9, pp. 458–60, 462–6.

² Humayun Kabir (1906–69); educated in Calcutta and Exeter College, Oxford; active student in Oxford where he was President of the Oxford Majlis and Secretary of the Student's Union (1930); taught in the Calcutta university (1933–45); member of the Bengal Legislative council (1937–45; 1946–48); deputy leader of the Krishak Proja Party (1937–45); associated with Abul Kalam Azad, acting as his Secretary at the Simla Conference in 1946; held various administrative positions in the Government of India and was Member of Parliament from 1956 to 1969; Kabir was a prolific writer and a distinguished journalist.

³ Sarojini Naidu (1889–49); educated in Madras, King's College, London, and Ginton College, Cambridge; came into close contact with G.K. Gokhale, M.A. Jinnah and the Nehru household; elected Congress President in 1925; imprisoned in 1942; Governor of UP from 1947 to 1949; author of three books of poetry (translated into many Indian vernaculars): *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912), and *The Broken Wing* (1915–16).

⁴ Kunwar Mohammad Ashraf (1902–62); educated at the Aligarh College and the Jamia Millia Islamia; went to England where he wrote his thesis on the 'Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan'; returned to India in 1932 and began to play a key part in the Congress Socialist Party; organized the Muslim Mass Contact campaign; active in the Communist movement; imprisoned in the Deoli concentration camp (1939); released in 1943.

⁵ Richard Stafford Cripps (1889–1952); educated at University College, London; Solicitor-General (1930–31); Labour MP (1931); Champion of the United Front with left-wing parties (1936); Ambassador to Russia (1940); named Lord Privy Seal and leader of House of Commons (February 1942); special envoy to India (March–April 1942); President of Board of Trade (1945–47); Chancellor of Exchequer (1947–50).

⁶ Sorensen Reginald William (Lord Sorensen) (1891–1971); Labour MP, for Lyton West, 1929–31 and 1935–66; well-known for demanding, along with other Labour MPs, in September 1945 the release of political prisoners and restoration of civil liberties in India; active in the India League; member, Parliamentary Delegation to India, 1946, Lord Sorensen remained all through his life a friend of India, and upheld Indian causes.

⁷ Harold Joseph Laski (1893–1950); leading political scientist and Professor at the London School of Economics; had a profound influence on many Indians, including Jawaharlal Nehru and V.K. Krishna Menon; author of *The Problem of Sovereignty* (1917); *Authority in the Modern State* (1919); *Communism* (1927); *Liberty in the Modern State* (1930); *Parliamentary Government in England* (1938); *The American Presidency* (1940), etc.

75. Before Calcutta

*National Front, 23 April 1939.**23 April 1939*

The nation's representatives met at Tripuri, with the national organization without a top and in the throes of an organizational crisis. The Pant Resolution was passed as a way of solving the crisis, forming the national leadership. The National Demand Resolution was passed as the line for our whole movement. The time for national self-assertion has come, this was the command for the people.

The precious months are gone, we drift without a lead, the nation is without a leadership. The international crisis is maturing towards a world war in the immediate future, but our premier national organization stands paralyzed by its own internal crisis. The ranks look helplessly on. The crisis is at the top beyond their reach. They cannot solve it, it has to be solved. It is not being solved; disruptive elements are getting the change of their lives coming to the fore. The session of the AICC is a matter of days. Would not Calcutta become another Tripuri, or still worse, smash the unity of our organization which is the strength of our movement? This is the question being asked by every honest Congressman.

In such a grave situation we cannot ignore fundamentals but must seek a solution on their basis.

Subhas Bose was a candidate of the Left but after his success he became the President of the whole Congress. Accepting him as a Rashtrapati became a mandate for every Congressman. The Tripuri Congress gave a mandate to the Rashtrapati to form the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji. Carrying out this mandate became the solemn duty of President Bose.

The stalemate continues. Time flies by. Long distance correspondence is only multiplying difficulties, not clearing them away. Gandhiji and President Bose must meet together immediately and form the Working Committee.

Neither an exclusively Right nor a Left but a United Working Committee alone meets the needs of the situation. A united leadership alone is capable of keeping intact the unity of the Congress. Inspiring confidence in the entire ranks and effectively preparing our people for a nation-wide struggle against imperialism. It is difficult to see now any other basis on which a Working Committee can be formed and functioned. This is what President Bose has to put before Gandhiji. This is no matter for bargaining or dictation. President Bose is the spokesman while Gandhiji is the final judge; this is the clear meaning of the Tripuri Resolution.

It is for President Bose to take the initiative and get Gandhiji to form the Working Committee. As the President of the Congress he has no other alternative but to unconditionally implement the Tripuri mandate. We of the Left have a special claim on him for he is our candidate. The country is getting restive.

Non-implementing of the Tripuri resolution would be defiance of the Congress, the setting up of oneself against the whole organization. This would damn the Left and isolate President Bose. The Left stood for democracy within the organization when it put up and fought for Bose. The Left has to stand by democracy and see that its successful candidate implements the democratic decision of the organization. The Left, if it is to fulfil its role, be true to its claims, has to prove that it regards democracy not as a demagogic slogan to win sectional gains for itself but the fundamental basis on which the unity of our movement can and must be maintained.

With a Left President at the head of the organization our very political bonafides are being put to acid test. Every genuine Leftist is chafing at the delay in forming the Working Committee, for much more than the narrow interests of the Left, its very claims, are at stake.

Delay is opening the door to disruption. The unity of the Congress was somehow saved at Tripuri. It again stands threatened, the gain is slipping through our fingers. Delay in forming the Working Committee resulting in handing over the initiative to Right disruptors who are rapidly mobilizing their entire strength to achieve successfully what they failed to do at Tripuri—impeach the President who refuses to or is unable to carry out the decision of the Congress and form its Working Committee, and under this cover wage a war against the whole Left, and choose a ground on which it will find the Left itself seriously divided.

The longer the stalemate continues, the more the initiative passes to the Right, the worse grows the confusion amongst the Left and more desperate the efforts of Left disruptors. Would the final initiative pass over to the disruptors on either side?

The answer depends on one man, President Bose. By forming the Working Committee in union with Gandhiji and if no agreement can be achieved according to his wishing alone, he can isolate disruptors on either side, unite the best of Congressmen and make the Calcutta AICC face the vital issues that face us all.

The mass of Congressmen who belong neither to Right nor to the Left are sick of the controversy, they rightly see the delay in forming the Working Committee as endangering the unity of the Congress throwing it rudderless on a stormy sea. Influenced by the mass movement in the localities which is being led by the Left they were being radicalized and orientating towards the Left and enthusiastically voted for Bose. They are now hardening against the Left, recoiling from their support to the President they themselves had helped to elect, for they find that it has led to a national crisis and the Leftist President is unable to solve it. They had hoped for the whole movement being carried forward by Bose as President. They are now growing panicky when they find that even an internal crisis cannot be solved by him. This is an ominous sign which the entire Left and above all President Bose must immediately note.

The internal crisis facing the Congress at Tripuri continues and has grown worse. At Tripuri we could rightly lay the blame for bringing it about on the Right. At Calcutta how will the Left defend itself against the charge of perpetuating and not solving it. Tripuri suggested a solution instructing the President to form the Working Committee according to the wishes of Gandhiji. The blame would now fall on the President for not forming the Working Committee yet and continuing the crisis.

If the victory of the presidential election is not to be transformed into a miserable defeat, if the Leftist President is to be saved from the charge of being factional, if the Left is to escape the severest discredit of its life, if the unity of the Congress has to be maintained, if disruptors on either side have to be checked the first condition is to form a Working Committee in accordance with the Tripuri resolution.

Political and organizational issues of vital importance await solution at Calcutta.

In face of the international crisis the anti-war resolutions of the Congress have to be concretized and directions given to the lower units of the Congress organization as to what they have to do to fight the war danger and how to act when it has actually broken out.

The National Demand resolution has to be implemented, a hurricane campaign launched to popularize it.

Congress Committee have to be instructed to work in cooperation with workers and peasants organizations.

The suspension of the States' People's struggles has encouraged the Princes to launch a counter-offensive and stir up communal troubles. Full active support to the States' people has to be pledged so that they may initiate a nation-wide and centralized struggle for Civil Liberties and Responsible Government.

The Congress as an organization has to be activitized, purified and strengthened so that it becomes a still better instrument of the national will. It has to be seen that the constitutional amendments retain and broaden the mass basis of the Congress and not knock it but that there is encouragement to initiative from below and not its stalling that there is greater internal unity in the Congress and not the liquidation of the Left.

But it is idle to talk of all this as long as the crisis over the national leadership is not solved. It is only if a Working Committee can be formed before Calcutta that the AICC will get a chance to discuss these urgent issues. If the Working Committee is not formed till then the AICC will become the platform for charges and counter-charges, mutual mudslinging and the whole session may end in smoke. That will not be shaping our fate but exposing our shame.

76. 'The Blood of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs has Mingled Here': Frontier Gandhi Places Wreaths on Memorial in Kissakhani Bazar

Tribune, 25 April 1939.

Peshawar
23 April 1939

'In this heart of Kissakhani, where we stand today to commemorate the great memory of those many brave comrades who fearlessly laid down their lives in the country's cause, the blood of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs has freely flowed and intermingled. This little monument will for ever bear testimony to their unparalleled courage and sacrifice and inspire our countrymen to march together towards freedom.'

This stirring message was given by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, while placing the wreath on the martyrs' memorial today before a huge, bare-headed crowd who had collected at Kissakhani Bazar to celebrate the ninth anniversary of the Peshawar firing of April 23, 1930.

A surge of enthusiasm passed through the crowds when four thousand Red Shirts, all bare-headed, marched past the memorial lines, four deep, carrying huge banners of tri-colours and shouting 'Hindustan Azad' and 'Inqilab Zindabad'. Dr Khan Sahib, Frontier Premier, who was standing close to the memorial with a Gandhi cap in hand, took the salute.

77. Scramble for Office

Leader, 28 April 1939.

28 April 1939

There are those who regard the struggle for power among the Congress leaders as something deplorable. Others however consider it as evidence of zest for public service. If previously Congress leaders did not canvass votes for their own election to the presidential chair, or the opposite party did not employ all kinds of means to secure their defeat, it showed not that they were better Congressmen, but that they were politically inert. It is interesting to note that this consuming passion to serve the country by securing some office in the Congress hierarchy is not confined merely to the more prominent leaders. It seems to permeate the entire organization. There are so

many unknown warriors whose achievements remain unrecorded. What the secretary of a tehsil Congress committee in the Central Provinces did the other day is an instance in point. One of the members of the committee gave notice of a motion expressing no-confidence in the secretary. Naturally this functionary was very much annoyed. Was it for this that he had undergone imprisonment and made other sacrifices? He must have also felt that the more polite way of expressing no-confidence in him was to say that the committee had full confidence in Mahatma Gandhi's leadership. This was the method adopted at Tripuri. But he rose equal to the occasion. He seized all the papers and files, fled from the place where the meeting was being held, and shut himself in a room. It is said that in 1857 when a powder magazine at Delhi was about to fall into the hands of mutineers, those inside set fire to it. They perished but the mutineers too went back disappointed. We can be sure that if the secretary of the tehsil Congress committee did not set fire to the room, it was not because he did not hate his opponents enough, but because he thought that the hour for martyrdom had not yet arrived. He must have argued that if even the Rashtrapati who had been condemned at Tripuri was content with merely developing a temperance, why should he cut short his all too brief career merely to spite his opponent. The incident shows the superiority of the Congressmen of today over those of a previous generation. Formerly Congressmen were merely parlour politicians. They were interested in politics, but they were not single-minded enough to regard the secretaryship or presidentship of the Congress or allied organizations as the be-all and end-all of life. The whole time politicians of today are like the legendary Chinaman who said, 'Me no drinke for drinke, me drinke for drinke'. It is not pleasure he sought but oblivion. But whatever the cause, this scramble for office is an interesting development in Congress politics. No doubt, the Congress high command will, if their attention is drawn to the incident, condemn the behaviour of the tehsil Secretary referred to above, but it will be interesting to know who will throw the first stone at him, the Rashtrapati, or his adversary the Sardar.

78. Act Decisively

Editorial, *National Front*, 30 April 1939.

30 April 1939

After days of torturous suspense, the AICC meets on the 29th to take momentous decisions. It will no doubt lift the night-mare of disunity and disintegration, and clear the atmosphere of petty squabbles, suspicion and personal prejudices. This is as it should be. For the present meeting of the All India Congress Committee is no ordinary meeting. It is the session of the General staff of our National Struggle, not to discuss general policies but to lay down practical plans for immediate action, and decisive action at that. There is no room for anything else.

Between Tripuri and now, when we were primarily busy solving the organizational crisis, the menace of war increased every day. Today it is no longer a distant menace to be fought at some future date. War may burst out any moment. Conscription in Britain, feverish preparations in India, the new amendment of the Government of India Act, that is how Imperialism has already prepared itself for its war of slavery and carnage.

What reply have we given? What reply shall we give? That is the question of AICC has to answer. The Congress has repeatedly declared that it is opposed to India's participation in an Imperialist War. Such declaration of a general policy is not enough. The large mass of our people still do not realize how near War has come. Still less do they realize their immediate duty in the fight against it. The AICC must give a general call to the country, rouse them to the immediate danger and give practical suggestions of how to fight it. Men in every station and every walk of life

should be provided with practical steps to begin the fight from now; we cannot afford to wait till the war actually bursts out.

The AICC must proclaim on behalf of the Nation, that India has outlawed War and that the Supreme National Organization has begun the struggle against it.

The first against war is indissolubly connected with our National Struggle. Imperialists War cannot be fought successfully without a National War against Imperialism. Uncompromising struggle against Federation, against every part of the slave Constitution, a complete reversal of our present ministerial policy—all these are put on the immediate agenda by the prospect of war. To slacken the struggle for National Freedom out of any consideration, is to help imperialist War; to continue the present policy of drift, of vacillation, of compromise is to encourage the world-slaughter being organized by the Imperialist Powers. Only struggle, decisive struggle, waged without fear and hesitation, can defeat the war plans of Government and force the pace of national emancipation.

But the struggle must be an all embracing one. It must mobilize the entire resources of the nation for this final assault. All the strategic points, and forces must be gathered if the fight is to be effective.

It cannot, therefore, leave out of consideration the strategic position of Indian States. The Feudal Princes, with their enormous power of privilege and purse, with their vast territories, constitute the most important war-prop of imperialism. No struggle against War and for national freedom can succeed unless the Nation directs all its energies to undermine the reserve power of the war-mongers.

Fortunately, the balance has already shifted in favour of the Nation. The States' subjects are wide awake and have rapidly lined themselves with the people of British India in the struggle for democratic rights and emancipation. It is not 1914 but 1939 and the task of the Princely order is not easy.

Yet the supreme organization has not discharged its duty in connection with these rising struggles. It has failed to coordinate and guide them. Even though non-intervention has been given up, the prevailing policy localizes struggles, instead of extending them and hopes thereby to bring pressure on the Princes. These ill founded hopes have been shattered by the developments in Rajkot. Even Gandhiji, with all his prestige, is not yet successful against the petty Thakore. The strength of the Rajkot people alone was not sufficient to bend down the Princely order, which acts as a united team against popular aspirations.

The Congress can no longer make experiments with pressure politics. The situation demands drastic action, the fullest mobilization of National Unity. War and Federation cannot be defeated unless the States' struggles are coordinated under the leadership of the Congress and a mighty challenge is delivered to Imperialism.

The meeting of the General Staff cannot neglect the question, cannot postpone its consideration even for a day. A General Staff which neglects the most strategic front is not worth the name.

Similarly it cannot neglect yet another important front, the problem of minorities. The growth of communal riots, and communal ill-feeling in recent months; is not unconnected with the war-preparation of Imperialism. Imperialism can conduct its war only on the basis of National disruption, and communal disharmony. The Hindu and Muslim disrupters are indirect agents of Imperialist War. They have to be fought by rescuing the minority masses from their poisonous influence. Rajkot has shown us what price we may have to pay for neglecting the Muslim minority or other minorities like the untouchables. The problem must be tackled and settled as part of the struggle which is imminent.

In laying down plans for immediate struggle the AICC will have to undertake the task of reorganizing and vitalizing the National army. The agenda includes changes in the constitution

which have been pending for a long time. There has been much loose talk about purging the Congress, rendering it more non-violent, purifying it, without an understanding of the basic objective.

There is no doubt that the Congress is in need of reorganization. But the basic aim of any such reorganization can only be to increase the fighting capacity of the Congress. The Congress is nothing if it is not a fighting organization.

The impending struggle renders it all the more necessary to increase its fighting resources, its elasticity and initiative. This can be done only on the basis of wider democratization, better functioning of the lower ranks and committees, and by insisting that members of Congress must in some way or other forge indissoluble links with the masses and their partial struggles. The Congress must function as a democratic organization, the rank and file must feel and act as members of a democratic body. This alone will purify the Congress of unstable elements and increase its fighting capacity.

Any other principle or objective is, therefore, disruptive. To purge the Congress of active elements, under pretext of discipline and purification, to curtail the free right of the rank and file to elect their nominees, or abolish proportional representation which alone secures the maximum measure of unity is to disrupt the Congress and the struggle.

Meeting in the midst of clash of arms, the AICC has a historic duty to perform. It has to lay down plans for immediate struggle and reorganize its army. It has to assure the country that in spite of all that has happened, the Congress is ready to accept the challenge of imperialist war and meet it with the full resources of the Nation. Let the AICC prove equal to its task.

79. The Congress

Editorial, *Leader*, 3 May 1939.

3 May 1939

No one, Congressman or non-Congressman or anti-Congressman, can remain unmoved by the distressing spectacle that the Indian National Congress presents today. It has been apparent for some considerable time that there is a cleavage in the ranks of Congressmen right from the top to the bottom. But no one—at least none outside the inner circle of the Congress—would have been prepared for the most unedifying presidential contest that preceded and the subsequent scenes that were enacted at the Tripuri Congress. The virtual censure of the sick president at that session was pathetic to a degree. What was his fault, so far as outsiders could see, except that he did not bow to the Mahatma's decision that he should not seek election to the presidential office? The Mahatma never fails to advertise that he is no longer a member of the Congress. But, equally he never fails to make his authority felt by and over the body of which he parades his non-membership. He is outside the Congress constitution but determines what the Congress shall or may not do and who shall and why may not be entrusted with authority and responsibility in that organization. This is democracy with a vengeance.

We do not profess to know over-much of the fundamental difference of ideology or technique between the so-called rightists and leftists in the Congress. But we have never been able to make out that the differences are of such a nature or magnitude as to make co-operation between them impossible. It is not so much a case of revolutionaries versus constitutionalists as of revolutionaries versus revolutionaries. For even Mr Kailas Nath Katju derives pleasure from speaking of the tearing of the Government of India Act to pieces (after having told an admiring audience soon after becoming a Minister that they were now in the enjoyment of Swaraj!) while some of his ministerial

colleagues are not tired of repeating that their principal aim is to produce a revolutionary mentality in the people vis-a-vis non-Congressmen, the two sections are *ek dil*. So we at least do not see that they are called upon to choose between the so-called rightists and the so-called leftists. Certainly the attitude of both towards non-Congressmen as a whole is one of undisguised unfriendliness and contempt.

Our feeling about the Congress malady is that it has its roots in personal differences more than in any fundamental difference of principle or policy—unless it be that events should prove Mr Subhas Chandra Bose to have been in the right when he accused a rival section of Congress leaders of toying with the untouchable scheme of federation. It is an open secret that Mr Bose, who was brought up under the leadership of C.R. Das (who too resigned his presidentship rather than submit with meekness to authority sought to be imposed on him), was never ever ready to agree to compromises in order to please or placate the Mahatma. We write subject to correction, but we think we are right in saying that there was no substantial difference between him and Mr J. Nehru but that the latter, unlike Mr Bose, would not separate himself from the Mahatma even for the sake of his strongest convictions. The notorious differences between Mr Bose and the Sardar, who is the right-hand man of the Mahatma, could not have had the effect of smoothing the relations between Mr Bose and the Mahatma. The action of leading members of the Congress Working Committee in making a public declaration against the candidature of Mr Bose for the presidentship, while yet they were working with and under Mr Bose in the committee, was an act of constitutional impropriety of the first magnitude. Mr J. Nehru's subsequent wobbling over this matter caused not a little surprise not only in non-Congress but even in Congress circles. That Mr Bose should, in spite of this from of the earthly all-highest, expressed in the form of that published ban against him, have had the effrontery not to withdraw from the presidential contest, was an offence grave enough not to be condoned. That he should have actually succeeded in defeating the Mahatma's chosen nominee, made his offence unforgivable and he had to be excommunicated with bell, book and candle. The sick president was at Tripuri but he was censured in Mr Pant's resolution, which obviously was inspired from above. Even the genuineness of his illness was seriously questioned by his own 'friends' and colleagues.

Once that resolution was passed, thanks to the astonishing and unprecedented loyalty of his socialist colleagues to whom he was indebted for his majority in the election, it was obvious that Mr Bose would have to go. Only, the event was delayed. In the end, as the proceedings at Calcutta have shown, his fellow Congress leaders insisted upon having their pound of flesh and saw to it that they got it. The condition subject to which alone they would tolerate Mr Bose as president was the negation of his personal and political self-respect. We are not surprised that he refused to pay the price demanded of him and preferred, like an honourable man, to regain his freedom by giving up that titular office....¹

We do not at all think that with the resignation of Mr Bose and the election in his place of the suave Babu Rajendra Prasad, internal Congress troubles are by any means at an end.² We are not inclined to think that either Mr Bose or his supporters, more particularly in Bengal, would take the gross insult offered to him lying down. We fear we shall have to be prepared to witness many more unedifying scenes inside the Congress. And what with the creaking of the Congress ministerial machinery in at least some provinces, notably the United, combined with schism in the Congress itself, we cannot think that all will be smooth sailing for Congress leaders in the coming months. While on account of our view of Congress policy and Congress methods we cannot profess to be mournful on this account, as Indian nationalists we cannot but feel a certain regret that the oldest and greatest political organization in the country should have brought itself to such a parlous state

due to a succession of blunders which its members could have avoided without much difficulty. For the rest, we shall 'wait and see'.

¹ Bose resigned at the AICC meeting held in Calcutta on 29th April. In his place Rajendra Prasad was elected President for the remaining period of the year.

² The Viceroy informed the Secretary of State for India on 5 May 1939: 'The outcome of the deliberations of the All India Congress Committee at Calcutta to the extent that they have quite clearly and definitely reaffirmed the position of the Mahatma and that they have resulted in side-tracking of Bose, has taken very much the line which one anticipated. Rajendra Prasad, from all I have heard of him, ought to make an excellent Chairman of the Working Committee, and, as you will remember, his general attitude was definitely helpful in the discussions which took place not long since....'

80. The Mahatma's Leadership

Editorial, *Leader*, 4 May 1939.

4 May 1939

If the Congress did not pretend to represent the whole of the country—Hindus, Muslims and everybody else who claims to be an Indian—its internal squabbles would not be a matter of public concern. But since the claim of the Congress is that it is a national institution which commands the confidence of the country and that it alone can speak for the country, the bearing of those squabbles on the future of the country cannot be ignored and must be appreciated. The London papers have welcomed the result of the happenings at Calcutta as a victory for the Mahatma. We dare say the Anglo-Indian papers which have taken the Congress during the last two years under their sheltering wings, will also read in the results achieved at Calcutta a victory for the Mahatma and a triumph for the rightists. Superficially this view is right. For the moment the leftist elements have lost the battle and it has once again been demonstrated that one, whether it is a Nariman or a Khare or a Subhas Bose, dare cross the path of the Mahatma. When the Mahatma has made up his mind to achieve a certain result inside the Congress organization, it may be taken for granted that at the present moment nothing can stand in his way.

There are, however, signs visible that the supremacy of the Mahatma is not beyond challenge. The spirit of revolt is beginning to grow. Formerly critics were struck dumb when the Mahatma's name was mentioned on the platform and in the press. That is not so now. There are people who do not hesitate to express in trenchant language their dissent from his philosophy, from his methods, from his preachings and from his actions. Dr Khare, the ex-Premier of the Central Provinces—no doubt suffering from a sense of chagrin over his treatment last year—has ventured to criticize the Mahatma severely in an open letter. He has thrown an open challenge to him to stand in an election contest against him in the Central Provinces. That may look like a piece of bluff, but it is also indicative of the new spirit which the doings of the Mahatma and of the Congress have created in CP and the Maharashtra. The Congress has lost much of its hold in the Central Provinces and among the Mahrattas and the Hindu Mahasabha has been regaining its lost influence. In the towns in the United Provinces the position of the Congress today is not what it used to be before the communal riots. Benares, Cawnpore and several other places would have none of the Congress if the election were to take place tomorrow. Witness the Cawnpore Hindu Sangh's protest to the Premier of these provinces, which appeared in our issue of yesterday. In Benares the unjustified and unjustifiable curfew order against the Hindus has entered like iron into their soul and there is a growing feeling of distrust of the Congress. That is more or less the case in other big towns where the Hindus have come to realize that the Congress Government have done less than justice to them. For different reasons and from a different point of view the Mahommedans nearly everywhere

in these provinces and elsewhere have completely lost faith in the Congress. It may be all very well for some Congressmen to argue that the Muslim League has failed to settle the bitter Shia–Sunni controversy which has affected Muslim solidarity, but the fact remains that one section of the Muslims very strongly holds that even in this matter the Congress Government has not been fair to them.

The Congress newspapers too—no doubt of the leftist school—have not been sparing in their criticism. The *Hindustan Standard*, a very vigorous mouthpiece of the leftists of Calcutta, in paying a tribute to Mr Subhas Chandra Bose condemns the Mahatma and Mr Jawaharlal Nehru in unmeasured language. According to it (this opinion will not be shared by many in or outside the Congress) the Mahatma pales into insignificance compared to Mr Subhas Bose while Mr Jawaharlal Nehru appears to it dull. The *Bombay Sentinel* is scarcely less emphatic in its condemnation of the Congress. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* too has not minced matters. All this is indicative of the growing spirit of revolt. It will be yet sometime before the revolt becomes more pronounced and more effective.

Inside the Congress, if the proceedings of the All India Congress Committee are a fair guide, quite a number of men have not hesitated to condemn the Mahatma's policy or to express their disgust with the methods adopted by the Mahatma and his apostles in driving out Mr Subhas Bose from the office to which he had been elected by a majority of votes before the Tripuri Congress.

If that is the state of criticism by others the Mahatma's own criticism of the Congress to which we are regaled almost every week, leaves no room for doubt that corruption is rampant in the Congress and that it is drifting away more and more from the ideal of truth and *ahimsa*. The proceedings at Calcutta are the latest illustration of the doctrine of *ahimsa* being honoured more in the breach than in the observance. When men like Dr Rajendra Prasad, Mr Jawaharlal Nehru, Mr Pant, Dr B.C. Roy and Dr Ghosh can be mobbed or subjected to other indignities it is time for people to ask whether the much advertised doctrine of *ahimsa* has really permeated the mass mind or even the mind of the intelligentsia. As each breach of the rule of *ahimsa* takes place, whether it is at Ramdurg, Calcutta or anywhere else, we get a papal bull of condemnation from the Mahatma. But the Mahatma's faith in the efficacy of his doctrine remains unshaken and we are reminded from day to day by him and his followers that the path of India to freedom and independence lies through *ahimsa*.

What is it after all that has led to the breach between Mr Subhas Bose and the Mahatma's followers? Was it really a fight about some fundamentals? Is it the fact that the Mahatma does not want now independence whereas Mr Subhas Bose wants it? We venture to think that there is really speaking no difference between the rightists and the leftists so far as the political objective is concerned. It is sometimes said that the rightists are opposed to socialism and Mr Vallabhbhai Patel is treated as the open enemy of the socialists. Really speaking, when you come to examine the conduct of the Congress Governments you can scarcely say that they are anti-socialist. The rightists, too, are opposed to vested interests. They, too, want power not merely to be shared by the masses, to go into the hands of the masses. They have no love for the capitalists, though they may welcome pecuniary support from them. But this is not all. They certainly have no love for the middle classes. Only the socialists are in greater hurry than the rightists and less disposed to hide their real sentiments towards the British than the rightists who, weighted down by the cares of office, use the language of diplomacy. Both of them are out to down British imperialism. Only, Mr Subhas Bose and his followers would like to give notice to the British now to surrender to the Congress at discretion whereas the rightists would like to go a little slow and wait until the opportunity arises for them. They too declare that they will not support the British in any 'imperialist' war which may be 'imposed' on India. It may be that Mr Subhas Bose and his followers believe or

have reasons to believe that the Mahatma and the rightists intend to offer no opposition to the British if the war should break out. We are not in the confidence of any of them, but we venture to think that if the war should break out the rightists will be in no hurry to withdraw themselves from the Governments. They will stick to them as long as they can, help out not profess to help, oppose but not seem to oppose until a stage is reached when the British will no longer tolerate any such duplicity. Supposing a situation like this arises, what is going to happen to this country? In a remarkable article which appeared a few days ago in the *Statesman*, which with all its marked support of the Congress draws the line where British interests are concerned, pointed out the consequences of such conduct. With its conclusions generally we are inclined to agree. If such a situation should arise, it said that the whole scene in India might change overnight....

For the moment political power in eight provinces has drifted into the hands of a junta or dictatorship and for the moment, we confess there is no alternative to it. But the differences between Congressmen and Congressmen, between Congressmen and non-Congressmen, between the Hindus and the Muhamedans, between British India and the Indian states are far so much wider today than they were two years ago. The compliments, therefore, to the leadership of the Mahatma which are showered in abundance by the British must not be taken as having any reference to the future development of the constitution in India. That leadership is welcome so far as it enables the constitution to be worked for the present even though Congressmen may all the time go on repeating like parrots that they are wrecking the constitution. So far as the consolidation of forces in India making towards further advance are concerned, so far as the creation of Indian unity is concerned, which must be the basis of Indian self-government, the leadership of the Mahatma has hitherto been marked by failure.

81. The AICC Meeting: Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 May 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI.

The outcome of the deliberations of the All India Congress Committee at Calcutta to the extent that they have quite clearly and definitely reaffirmed the position of the Mahatma and that they have resulted in side-tracking of Bose, has taken very much the line which one anticipated. Rajendra Prasad, from all I have heard of him, ought to make an excellent Chairman of the Working Committee, and, as you will remember, his general attitude was definitely helpful in the discussions which took place not long since and at which he was present with Hubback and Hubback's Ministers over the Madras Estates Land Amendment Act. I was not surprised to find that feeling ran so high as it seems to have done at Calcutta; but perhaps that was only to be expected when it is a case of a defeat of this order for the leading representative of the Bengali point of view. But it is obvious that a good deal of what the Right Wing call 'hooliganism' or 'goondaism', when it is practiced against, and not by them, took place, and that there must have been some rather unpleasant scenes. It remains to be seen what the wider reactions in Bengal in particular will be.

82. Resignation

Editorial, *Medina*, 5 May 1939, Vol. 28, No. 32.

5 May 1939

The Calcutta session of the All India Congress Committee, which began according to schedule, has come to an end. In the history of the Congress it will always be known as a memorable session. It has put an end to the stalemate created by the absence of a Working Committee. At the

same time, it has proved that subservience to accepted rules and regulations and to personalities can not merely be tolerated, and people can even make bold to justify them. The resignation of Subhas Babu from Congress Presidentship is an event in Congress history which will either push India in the direction of dictatorship or throw the present leaders of the youth in Congress into infamy. If the gulf which exists today between these Congressmen who stand for principles and those who worship authority is not bridged, this difference will split the Congress. A detailed look at the matter will show that the whole responsibility of the present dispute lies on the Congress itself. Gandhiji is neither an ordinary member of the Congress nor is he responsible to anybody or to any section of the Congress; yet he is everything. The Congress does not allow any move without his advice or consent.

83. The AICC Meeting: Bose Resigns

Forward, 6 May 1939.

6 May 1939

The Rastrapati has been dethroned.¹ That is the clear outcome of the Calcutta meeting of the AICC. It would have been a real resignation were it tendered at Tripuri. In Calcutta, had he carried an hour longer, a direct motion of censure would get rid of him. In the hurry of the flight, the Rastrapati forgot another thing. Had Pandit Nehru's resolution requesting him to withdraw his resignation been passed, it would have amounted to a decision of the no confidence resolution passed at Tripuri. Subhas Babu might publicly declare the personnel of the Working Committee as he wanted it. Then, in spite of the request contained in Pandit Nehru's resolution being voiced by the House, he might decline to continue in the Presidential chair without the sort of Cabinet that suited him best. Pandit Nehru knew his business and withdrew his resolution in good time.

As it is, Subhas Babu has lost throughout the line. Immediately before or after the Presidential election, if he had given a substitute programme for the official programme of non-resistance to Imperialism, and had he taken his stand on it, the Left forces in the country would remain solid. Had such a programme been given even at Tripuri and had the resignation been forthcoming there, desertions by the CPI and CSP would not be as easy as they actually were. He would then stand as the rallying ground of all the leftist forces in the country. Even without the Presidential chair, he would remain a force to count with. But without a clear cut programme of fight and with the tenacity with which he clung to the chair despite the Tripuri resolution, he lowered himself in public estimation.

Let there be no misunderstanding on that score. Despite the ugly demonstrations against the rightist leaders, let no one labour under the delusion that Subhas Babu has gained in the respect and love of the people. This we say in spite of the fake congratulations and got up in meetings he is so fond of. Whatever amount of spontaneity there was in the demonstrations—there was undoubtedly a lot—was to the discredit of Subhas Babu. It only showed that he had succeeded in arousing an ugly sense of Provincialism. For some years past Bengal has been grouching—to the shame of the Province—that she is neglected in all politics and in the higher counsels of the Congress. To Subhas Babu's rescue came the feeling that the non-Bengali leaders were jealous of Bengal's darling and hence grudged him a second term on the Presidential chair. That Babu Rajendra Prasad of Bihar has been selected in his place, has rendered the mischief worse. The relation between the two neighbouring provinces has not been happy during recent years and rightly or wrongly, Babu Rajendra Prasad is known among sections of Bengalis as responsible for a good deal of the hardships of the Bengalees in Bihar.

From Gandhiji's letter to Subhas Babu, it appears that they differ in fundamentals. It is for that reason that Gandhiji did not feel competent to advise Subhas Babu as to the composition of the Working Committee. More than that the public knows little of Subhas Babu's plan or programme. Yet Subhas Babu has, by a queer combination of circumstances, become a symbol of revolt against Gandhian leadership. This is going to prove disastrous to the cause, disastrous to a real anti-Imperialist struggle. A revolt against Gandhi leadership is an absolute necessity today. It is already long overdue. If it is not organized immediately and out of a genuine concern for the revolutionary struggle of the Indian people, the struggle will suffer irreparably. But Subhas Babu is not the man for it. Nor is he deeply concerned about it. After the resignation, he is said to be getting together several people to form a party. Disgruntled individuals from groups of all shades of opinion may sometimes form a ministerial party but not a party for struggle for freedom from bondage. A party consisting of miscellaneous individuals from sundry groups, retired men, political adventurers, loyalists, reds, ex-khadivites, ex-Civil Guards, with a none too patriotic 'adviser general' functioning behind the leader, can only lead the national struggle astray.

Babu Rajendra Prasad has announced his Cabinet chosen exclusively from the Gandhian school of politics. It is not known whether he offered some seats to the Socialists or the Communists or rather to the members of the Parties that go by those names. They are not on the Committee and it would not make the least difference if some of them were. After Tripuri, their methods and whatever sort of struggle they might be contemplating, are bound to be circumscribed by the limitation of Gandhian leadership. Of all of those whom Tripuri has exposed, Pandit Nehru has somewhat retrieved his position by refusing to be included in the new Working Committee. No good is, however, expected to come out of it. Leftist in ideology but bound more firmly by other considerations with the rightists, he will not be very helpful to the revolutionary struggle, particularly where so much of tailism prevails.

¹ In an editorial comment the *Hindu* of 1 May observed: 'Subhas Babu's decision to resign the Presidentship of the Congress will be generally regarded as the right one, whatever the reasons that influenced him, and there will be general agreement too that the country could not have made a better choice to fill up the vacancy than the AICC has made. Once Bose had accepted the direction of the Tripuri Congress that he should appoint his Working Committee in consultation with Gandhiji and with the latter's wholehearted approval, it should have been plain to him that he would have to reappoint the old Working Committee in its entirety. For it is well known that the old Working Committee fully enjoyed Gandhiji's confidence and has under his guidance conducted the affairs of the nation so successfully that it was not to be supposed that Gandhiji would agree to its being scrapped wholly or in part on the grounds which Bose ... contemplated in the personnel of the Committee.'

The Viceroy told the Secretary of State for India on 5 May: 'I was not surprised to find that feeling ran so high as it seems to have done at Calcutta; but perhaps that was only to be expected when it is a case of a defeat of this order for the leading representative of the Bengali point of view. But it is obvious that a good deal of what the Right Wing call 'hooliganism' or 'goondaism', when it is practiced against, and not by them, took place, and that there must have been some rather unpleasant scenes. It remains to be seen what the wider reactions in Bengal in particular will be.'

84. Defeat Disruption

Editorial, *National Front*, 7 May 1939

Extreme Right Wing counsels in the nationalist leadership have at last prevailed. The crisis that had gripped the Congress for three months and recently threatened to paralyze our national movement altogether, has been 'solved'. But it has been solved in the wrong way, by a surgical operation that is bound to make it even more acute than in the past. The leftist President has been deposed and a 'pure, homogenous' leadership foisted on the Congress. After all that is known to have transpired between Tripuri and the Presidential resignation, no impartial Congressman can

contend that Sjt Bose had in the end any free choice in the matter. Nor can it be argued that personal considerations played any material part in the settlement of the issue. Formalities part, the blunt fact remains, that resignation was forced on the President by the Right, forced for political reasons, forced because the Right was not prepared to make the slightest concession to the newer nationalist force growing within the Congress.

Tripuri decided that the President should appoint a Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji. But it did this knowing full well that on matters of basic ideological approach, differences existed between the President and the Left forces on the one hand and Mahatmaji on the other. To have made these differences, therefore, the ground for declining to tender the necessary advice to the President, as was done by Gandhiji in his letter read out in the AICC, was to deny the very spirit of the Tripuri verdict. But Gandhiji's colleagues went even further. They demanded that Subhas Babu must either accept the old Working Committee as it stood, or he must have an entirely new committee and forego all active cooperation from the old guard. Apart from the fact that neither of these proposals could do anything but grave harm to the nation, the point to be understood is that both amounted to a positive demand from the President that he should vacate the chair. The first because the President would thereby have been compelled to deny the root significance of his election as the head of the Congress, the second because a Left Working Committee would have been thrown overboard by the AICC within a moment of its formation. It is no use waxing eloquent over or whispering in undertones regarding the personal factors that determined the attitude of the Right leaders towards Subhas. All such 'difficulties' stand exposed in the light of Pandit Jawaharlal's refusal to join the new Working Committee. Have the Right wing a 'personal' case against Pandit Jawaharlal also? The question has only to be put to be laughed out.

The significance of the Calcutta session of the AICC is therefore clear. All the inexorable factors that demand an immediate and complete consolidation of nationalist ranks, the unheard of calamities that today face the nation, are entirely lost on the Right wing. The Rajkot experiment has ended in a debacle. Gandhiji has confessed it in words that would make every nationalist burn with indignation at the demonical forces that will not move an inch to accommodate the most solicitous leader yet known to the mass movement in this country. Great Britain threatens to drag India into the hell—fire of war—not within a period of months but weeks. It refuses to take into consideration the views of our leaders on issues vital to its economic and political interests. Among the rank of the Congress the spirit of revolt is growing. The spirit of struggle and revolt is abroad among the masses. It must be unified and coordinated into a nation-wide struggle. Otherwise, it might break out in sporadic out-bursts that would be both terrifically tragic and futile. Reactionaries would take advantage of such isolated outbursts and divert them into communal channels. The question before the country today, once again as in 1920 and 1929, is not whether we have to have no struggle at all or a non-violent struggle. The question is whether we are going to have an organised and disciplined struggle or a complete disintegration of the national movement and its dissolution into chaos and defeat.

But our old national veterans either consciously or unconsciously (probably some consciously, and some otherwise) are determined to be entirely oblivious to this catastrophic situation. They have turned their backs upon it. It matters not to them if in their efforts to 'remodel the national movement' to their hearts desire, they entirely arrest the growth of that struggle and thereby invite it to break recklessly through the dams they would set up against it. They must have a 'homogenous' cabinet. They must have a peaceful atmosphere in the country. (Did not some one say of the Romans that they turned their Empire into a graveyard and called it peace?) The nation must have 'implicit faith' in Gandhiji if deeds are the true and real tests of opinions, then for the moment at least these slogans mean faith in the suspension of civil disobedience in the States, faith in

drifting towards the acceptance of Federation, faith in turning the mass resistance to war into an issue of individual conscience, faith in the 'theory' that Socialists, Communists, and Kisan Sabhaites in India are consciously working for violence and disorder, and are actuated by the most malicious intentions towards every Congress Ministry.

Under the circumstances it must be clearly realized that Calcutta may mark the beginning of a firm and (from the national point) a suicidal offensive by the Right against the Left. The next session of the AICC is due in June and it is clear as daylight that the main issue before it will be of 'purifying the Congress'. If the existing spirit of the Right Wing shows no signs of change in the interval (and prospects of such a change are not yet discernible) it is impossible to think of the impending 'purification' except with great alarm. Where 'violence' and Socialist inclinations are spelt alike, purification can only mean a purge of the Congress of all radical elements, a transformation of the Congress into a branch of the Gandhi Seva Sangh. If the spirit of Calcutta is to rule over the Congress, this is the only conclusion to which the organization must reach before long.

Right obduracy is the mother of left-adventurism and cheap leftist stunts. It is very significant that exactly in the degree in which Right Wing elements have displayed an unrelenting attitude towards the growth of healthy Left tendencies, theories (!) of 'alternative leadership' and 'a war against Gandhism' have sprouted out in the national movement. The danger of such tendencies entering into the most unprincipled and opportunist alliance with communal elements in the country will also grow as a result of the Rightist solution of the national crisis at Calcutta. A ruthless war will have to be declared against these pernicious enemies of the national movement, the more pernicious precisely because they masquerade as the most heroic and uncompromisingly revolutionary trends in the national movement.

Never were dangers of disruption so great, never the responsibility of socialists, Communists, and all genuine leftists so heavy. What the situation demands is immediate closing up of the ranks of the Left, complete unity of Socialists and Communists and all radical Congressmen. Not negative opposition to the Right Wing, not attempt to create a parallel and alternative leadership to overthrow the present leadership, but positive unity to carry forward the struggle on the basis of the National Demand Resolution of Tripuri, the anti-war resolution of Calcutta under the leadership of the Congress, is the need of the hour. Every opposition of the Right Wing to the carrying out of this line must be fought against and overcome but at no stage and in no case must the struggle degenerate into factional opposition to the Right Wing. This and this alone can be the true basis of Left Unity.

That our national movement has reached the dangerous stage in which it is today, is largely due to the fact that such unity of the Left has not yet been achieved. It is not yet too late to repair the damage and defeat the game of disruptors. For that a Conference of the Socialists, Communists, Kisan Sabhaites and Radical Congressmen must be called immediately. The most important issues before the conference must be:

- (1) Democratization of the Congress.
- (2) Struggle against the war
- (3) Implementing the National Demand resolution

On these matters the Conference shall have to give a concrete lead. Positive and concrete amendments to the Constitution Sub-Committee Report will have to be formulated so that the purification of the Congress is achieved along with its strengthening as a fighting organization of the people. On the issue of War, Calcutta has defined the attitude of the Congress clearly and unequivocally. But the danger is so imminent that unless active preparation are begun here and now to carry out that policy, unless the people are mobilized right from now to resist war and

explained how they are to resist it (refusal to join the army, refusal to subscribe to war loans, active resistance to transport war materials and troops by means of general strike on Railways and docks etc.) that resolution will remain on paper. The Conference will also have to decide how the opposition of elements in the Congress to the carrying out of this policy has to be overcome without weakening the Congress itself.

These are the immediate tasks before us. Repair the damage, defeat the game of disruptors, carry forward the struggle, must be our slogans.

85. The Congress in Bengal

Civil and Military Gazette (Lahore), reproduced in *Leader*, 7 May 1939.

7 May 1939

The fatality that has dogged the steps of the Congress in Bengal during the period that Gandhi has been its mentor seems still to be pursuing the Congress. Gandhi came in conflict with the late C.R. Das, when he was the undisputed leader of Bengal nationalism and the position of the Congress in Bengal was seriously weakened. C.R. Das formed a party of his own. Now Subhas Chandra Bose, after the reverse he has sustained at the hands of Gandhi and of Gandhi's supporters, is following in the footsteps of his political *guru*, the late C.R. Das, and is sponsoring a new party. The Bose episode has not increased Gandhi's popularity in Bengal, and the violent demonstrations against Gandhi's supporters in Calcutta during the deliberations of the All-India Congress Committee clearly indicate that the stock of the Congress in Bengal is decidedly low. How long the new political party which the supporters of Bose propose to form within the Congress will remain within the Congress is difficult to say, but taking into account the fact that the party will have for its aim, expressly or by implication, the overthrow of Gandhi and the 'Old Gang' generally, it is not unlikely that the Congress may find the new party a very unwelcome partner. The Congress has tried to prevent the supporters of Bose from undermining its position in Bengal by appointing Bidhan Chandra Roy and Prafulla Ghose in the place of Sarat Chandra Bose and Subhas Chandra Bose, but the demonstrations staged by the youthful supporters of Subhas Bose against this Congress move leave little doubt that the last has not been heard of the Bose episode, at least, in Bengal.

86. The AICC Meeting

Tribune (Lahore), reproduced in *Leader*, 7 May 1939.

7 May 1939

Passions ran high at the conclusion of the AICC meeting at Calcutta. Not a few of those who had grown grey in the service of the country and deserved to be treated with respect and consideration, even if their attitude did not have universal support, were insulted and man-handled. There have of late been many eruptions indicating that the Congress organization—on the healthy working of which depends the salvation of the country—is suffering from a deep-seated disease. At the open session of the Tripuri Congress there was such a violent manifestation of petulance and intolerance that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru cried out in anguish that he did not know how the battle of Swaraj would be won. The present outburst of mob fury is even more regrettable. Nobody ever imagined that things would come to such a pass that the idols of the people would have to be protected from the people themselves—that men like Rajendra Prasad and Bhulabhai Desai would have to be escorted to their cars by volunteers and policemen. The ugly scenes were not however, without their redeeming feature. With a few exceptions all members of the AICC conducted themselves

with commendable restraint and dignity and Subhas Chandra Bose did all that lay in his power to restrain the incensed crowd.

87. The AICC Meeting: North West Frontier Province
Governor's Report, 9 May 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2210, NAI.

[Extract]

The proceedings of the recent meetings of the All India Congress Committee at Calcutta have been watched with interest in this Province. My Ministers are entirely pro-Gandhian, but a considerable proportion of their followers are still in favour of Bose, and think that he may yet emerge successful from the struggle. There is general agreement that the spilt in Congress is more real than any of the numerous cleavages which have appeared in the last 15 years. A European war is now regarded as the only solution of the disagreement, and the Right and the Left leaders would then sink their differences in a common stand against any participation in the War. In the meantime, whether Bose or the Mahatma prevails, this Province will continue to command special consideration from the Congress President. In other Congress Provinces the Ministerial Party has a powerful majority, whereas here the dissolution of the present Ministry would probably mean that the Congress would not be able to regain office. It is interesting to note that, contrary to the general impression that Bose would antagonize Muslims, some people of position believe that he is really less communal than Gandhi and that the Mahatma's following of Muslim is confined to this Province. Nevertheless, if Bose were to succeed he should certainly allay some of the grievances of the Hindus.

A new development in the field of politics is the subsidizing of the Ahrar Party by the Ministry to counter the progress being made by the Khaksar organization. The Ministers have apparently been alarmed by a recent Khaksar demonstration at Utmanzai, the center of the Red Shirts and the home of Abdul Ghaffar Khan. This was followed by a large Ahrar meeting at Peshawar at which the tone of the speeches was most objectionable. Similar demonstrations have taken place in Hazara District. The rivalry between Congress and the Muslim League has therefore now taken the form of a vituperative conflict between organized and semi-armed bands of Muhammadans.

Peshawar City was the scene of considerable excitement and disorder in consequences of the decision of the Congress Party and the Muslim League to celebrate April 23rd as Martyrs' Day in memory of the people who were killed during the riots of 1930. Both parties erected memorials in the main street. Khan Sahib was personally opposed to the construction of any memorial by his Party. The memorials are in essence political advertisements and the political friction they have caused detracts attention for the time being from their real significance.

88. The AICC Meeting: Linlithgow to Zetland, 12 May 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI.

[Extract]

There is no question, that the Mahatma and his friends have delivered a decisive blow to Subhas Bose. On the other hand, I have the feeling that the forces behind Bose are probably a good deal more formidable than may appear on the surface and I suspect that the Right Wing fully realize this. I incline myself to the view that the situation is as yet by no means fully developed, and I would prefer to wait a little longer before attempting any comprehensive appreciation of it, though

we have, I think, no reason for dissatisfaction with the way things have so far gone or with the general prospect.

89. Dismissed Women Workers

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 12 May 1939.

Re-instatement of all women workers of the Union North Jute Mills at Beliaghata, who had been deprived of their jobs by the Mill authorities, that is, Messrs Bird & Co., was demanded at a public meeting held on Thursday evening at the Albert Hall under the auspices of the Women's Sub-Committee, Labour Party, Bengal.

The first part of the proceedings was presided over by Mr Syed Nausher Ali and the latter part by Begum Sakina F. Maunyidzada, Councillor, Calcutta Corporation.

A unique scene was witnessed in the streets of Calcutta yesterday when about 500 women workers, belonging to various communities, old and young, married and unmarried, marched in a procession, with placards in their hands containing their demands, from Beliaghata Jute Mills, to the Albert Hall.

Mr Nausher Ali addressing the meeting said that mere passing of some resolutions would not carry them far to the attainment of their objective. It was their duty to take up the matter with all seriousness, so that these distressed workers might get back their jobs and earn their livelihood.

Sjts Bepin Behary Ganguly, Bankim Mukherji, Abdur Rahman and Sreejuktas Labanya Lata Chandra and Bimal, Prativa Devi also addressed the meeting and laid emphasis on the necessity for agitation for the fulfillment of the demands of the poor workers.

Sjt Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar in course of a message congratulated the women workers of the Union North Jute Mills on the grim struggle they had launched against the mill-owners. He called upon the workers to offer a stubborn resistance so that the mill-owners might be compelled to come down and meet the demands of the workers. He also appealed to the public to contribute their mite for the relief of the distressed workers and help them in all possible means.

The following resolutions were adopted at the meeting:

This meeting of the citizens of Calcutta expresses its emphatic indignation at the unwarranted dismissal of all women workers, numbering about 500, of the Union North Jute Mills at Beliaghata by Messrs Bird & Co., although the said workers have to their credit long-standing services in the Mill ranging from 10 to 50 years.

In the opinion of this meeting the dismissal is a matter of a great concern to thousands of women workers who are employed in the different departments in the jute mill industry because the same act may be repeated by the owner of other jute mills resulting in the unemployment of large number of women workers, which would further accentuate the already acute problem of unemployment in the Jute mill areas.

The meeting therefore thinks it essential that such acts of the Jute Mills bosses must be stopped at all cost, and demands the re-instatement of all the women workers of the Union North Jute Mill by the mill-owners at an early date.

The meeting calls upon the public in all the progressive organizations and jute mills workers in particular to agitate against the dismissal of women workers from jute mills and for the re-instatement of the victimized women workers of the Union North Jute Mills. Considering the distressed condition of the victimized workers the meeting calls upon the generous public to render financial help to them and send all contributions to Miss Mira Dutta Gupta, MLA, at 41 Hazra Road, Kalighat, Calcutta.

It was also decided to wait in deputation on the Chief Minister and the Mill authorities with a view to taking necessary steps for the re-instatement of the victimized workers.

Among those present were: Sjt Hema Prabha Mazumdar, Sjt Sib Nath Banerji and Dr Suresh Chandra Banerji. Besides a large number of ladies were also present.

90. Muzaffarpore Momin Conference

Searchlight, 14 May 1939.

The Muzaffarpore Sub-division Momin Conference was held at village Darapatti, about 10 miles from Muzaffarpore, on May 8 and 9 under the presidentship of Mr Abdul Qaiyum Ansari, President of the Bihar Provincial Jamiatual Momineen.¹ Prominent among those present, besides the president, were Mr A.A. Md. Noor, MLC, Maulana Asim Bihari, Maulana Qazi Md. Usman, Hakim Moinuddin Ahmad Ansari, General Secretary of Muzaffarpore District Jamiat, and others.

Mr Qaiyum Ansari, the president, in course of a stirring address, said that the Momin movement aimed at organizing the Momin community under the banner of the A.I. Momin Conference and bringing it on one common platform to attain its political² rights and claims; which were being usurped by the capitalist and upper class Muslims. The unprecedented popularity and success the movement had gained within a very short period, he said, had completely unserved the upper class and capitalist Muslims, who were now carrying on a false and mischievous propaganda to crush this movement of the poor and downtrodden Momins so that the latter might not become so organized and strong as to take back their rights and shares, which the former had so long been enjoying. Mr Ansari proceeding further asked the Momins to set their own house in order first and not to mind the 'friendly' advices tendered off and on to them by those whose sympathy and record of service was nil so far as Momins and other working class Muslims were concerned. He condemned those selfish Muslim leaders who only with a view to exploit the poor Momins were dissuading them from joining the Momin movement and called upon the Momins at once to organize and unite completely in order that they might attain their rights in no time.

¹ Abdul Qaiyum Ansari (1905–73); educated at the universities of Aligarh, Calcutta and Allahabad; joined the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements before his close involvement in the Congress movement in Bihar; starting as Secretary of the Shahabad District Congress Committee (1930–31), he rose to become President of the Bihar PCC (1959–63) and member of the Congress Working Committee (1959–61); main architect of the All-India Momin Conference and editor of various newspapers and magazines, including *Al-Islah*, *Musawat* and *Tahzib*.

² An organization grown up among weavers, known as the Momin Ansar Party or the All-India Momin Conference. The organization claimed to represent forty-five million low-class Muslims: 'The Momin community proudly claims within its fold millions of Muslim *kisans*, labourers and artisans who make their living by the sweat of their brow. It is they who form the bulk and backbone of the Muslim community in India We represent the masses as against the classes who ... are largely represented by the Muslim League.' The party was opposed to the League, to Jinnah, and to Pakistan. According to W.C. Smith, 'The party had Congress leanings, though it was never quite a Congress party. It has been somewhat nationalist, out-spokenly so in its executive's resolutions. But in practice it has vacillated between demanding freedom for India and demanding recognition for itself.'

91. The AICC Meeting: 'Writing on the Wall'

Independent India, 14 May 1939.

14 May 1939

The Calcutta meeting of the AICC marked the triumph of the reactionary and counter-revolutionary forces in the Congress and the defeat of revolutionary tendencies. We have no doubt that the triumph will be a short-lived affair and that the revolutionary forces will at an early date convert the defeat into a victory. But to do that it is necessary to see the things in their proper perspective

and to realize the reactionary character of the actions and policies of the present-day leaders of the Congress.

The tide can be turned and the Congress can be moved ahead but only by working for the rise of a new leadership. Realities of the situation have shattered the beautiful dream fondly entertained by some of the 'Leftists' of moving forward towards a decisive struggle against imperialism under the leadership of the old leaders of the Congress. Bitter experience of the events since Tripuri should have shaken those 'Leftists' out of their smug belief of marching to Revolution under Gandhiji's leadership.

But illusions die hard. And even after the *coup d'état* at Calcutta and the capture of the entire machinery of the Congress by the Gandhi group, those 'Leftists' have not ceased their prattle about 'united leadership', 'national unity', 'Gandhiji giving the marching orders', etc. Our contemporary, the *Congress Socialist* published in its last issue a report from Patna, foreshadowing six vacancies in the Working Committee and is gleefully looking forward to the inclusion at an early date of some Socialists in the highest executive of the Congress. The *National Front* is more sober and realistic. It talks bitterly of the 'drift in every field' of the Right wing leadership but still has a pathetic faith in the latter reforming itself and leading a nationwide struggle against Federation and War.

Facts however are obdurate. They show that the Gandhian leadership is not prepared and willing to take even the slightest forward move, let alone initiating a decisive struggle against imperialism. Let us cast a glance at a few facts.

The resolutions of the Congress demand an unmitigated opposition to the War. But Rajaji, Satyamurti and other leaders are talking of the bargaining opportunities that a War will present and advocating a conditional support to England's war against Germany and Italy. The *Hindustan Times*, the mouthpiece of the financial magnates behind Gandhiji, looks upon the war as 'furnishing a new opportunity for industrialization' and confidently expects that the opportunity will be exploited. The latest to join the chorus of War-supporters is the *Sunday Times* of Madras

Turning to the issue of the Federation, what are the facts that stare us in the face? We cannot forget the significant fact of the evident delight of the British and the Anglo-Indian papers at the resignation of Subhas Bose and reinstallation of the Gandhian leadership in the Congress. They welcomed these developments as affording a more congenial atmosphere for an understanding between Great Britain and India. As usual, Satyamurti gives the case away. In Bombay he advocated capturing as many seats as possible in the Federal Legislature; in Poona he pleaded for the acceptance of the Federation with certain modifications. The big leaders talk with reserve and circumspection. But the very reserve and circumspection and the obstinate refusal to draw up the plan of action for combating the Federation give rise to apprehensions. An enemy is sometimes in a better position to judge the trend of events and to assess the objective significance of our actions. The remarks of Mr Jinnah and Sir Sikander Hayat Khan at the Muslim League Conference at Sholapur are therefore instructive. They openly allege that the Congress leaders are going to accept the Federation and are manoeuvring to secure a majority in the Federal Legislature. The allegations cannot be just lightly disposed of as the malicious attacks of our enemies. They help us in understanding the trend of Congress politics.

There is no such ambiguity regarding the struggles of the States' People. Contrary to the Congress resolutions and the general expectation born out of his own utterances and speeches, Gandhiji called off the civil disobedience movements in all the States as a result of his understanding with the Viceroy, ostensibly on the Rajkot issue, but possibly also on issues of far graver importance. And there is no early prospect of the revival of these movements in any of the States if Gandhiji's words have any meaning. The prospect of a nationwide campaign, referred to in the Tripuri

resolution on National Demand, is no brighter. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in his latest public speech at Banaras said: 'The present is not the time to launch a satyagraha fight, if satyagraha is started there will be anarchy in the country'. The reason given for such a gloomy perspective is of course, 'dissensions, indiscipline and corruption in the Congress' and violence in the country. Whatever the reasons, the moral is obvious. It is, that the Congress leaders are in no mood to start a 'nationwide campaign'.

The Congress Ministries are going in their merry way working economically and efficiently the imperialist administrative machine and trying to secure some small reliefs to the people. No change is contemplated in the method of their work or in the policy that they are to follow. And why should any change be contemplated when the Pant Resolution put at Tripuri the seal of approval of the entire Congress on those Policies?

At the recent Gandhi Seva Sangh meeting at Brindaban, Kher, the Bombay Premier, declared that the Congress was governing in eight provinces according to the principles preached by Gandhi. If that be so, and nobody can doubt that it is so, it is naïve on the part of the 'Leftists' to expect a change in the constitutionalist and reformist policies of the Congress Ministries as long as they adhered to the programme of Mr Gandhi.

The writing on the wall is clear. It tells that the Congress leadership is moving step by step towards an understanding and a compromise with British Imperialism. Its ethical dogmas and political principles inevitably lead it that way. It cannot conceive of a revolution and cannot tolerate the development of a revolutionary movement. It is conscious of the dangerous potentialities of the Congress functioning and developing as a free democratic movement of the Indian people. It must therefore curb it and keep it under its undivided control. That is the reason of Gandhi group's insistence on a homogeneous Working Committee. If Tripuri and Calcutta have proved anything, it is this that the Gandhi group is not prepared to tolerate in the Working Committee any person who cannot be assimilated with it. In view of this, the Leftist demand for a composite Working Committee and a united leadership is bound to remain a cry in the wilderness unless of course it means the inclusion in the Working Committee of some harmless 'lefts'. This is the writing on the wall. The radicals in the Congress can ignore it only at grave peril to themselves and to the Congress, whose continued existence as the organ of the Indian people's revolt is now entirely dependent on their revolutionary activity. It is the latter, in spite of and against the desires of the Right wing leaders, that alone will enable the Congress to translate its resolutions into action.

92. Democratize Bengal Congress

Notes and Comments, *Forward*, 20 May 1939.

20 May 1939

M.N. Roy in a public lecture at Mymensingh has given penetrating analysis of the present crisis in the Congress. He spoke of the course Bengal ought to follow if she wants to rescue the Congress from the authoritarian domination of the Gandhian leadership. It was Bengal which took the most uncompromising stand against the dictatorial ways of the present Rightist ruling clique in the Congress. But Bengal Congressmen should be alive to the fact that if democracy is desirable in all-India politics, it is no less desirable in Bengal politics. Roy pointed out that in order to appear as the leader of the democratic revolt of the Congress rank and file throughout the country, the Congress in Bengal must first of all democratize itself. Let Bengal have not an authoritarianism on a small scale. Speaking of the present Congress leadership of Bengal, Roy said that if the all-India

leaders are caught in the meshes of ministerialism, the leaders of the Bengal Congress are also more concerned with municipal politics and other petty local considerations than developing a revolutionary mass movement.

Further we must be careful that the revolt against the present authoritarian leadership of the Congress may not be vitiated by the canker of provincialism or communalism. As Roy points out, if any injustice has been done, the victim is not Bengal, but the entire lower ranks of the Congress. Hindu nationalism is no alternative to Gandhism; nor is provincialism an alternative to Patelism. Speaking of the Congress work in Bengal, Roy observed that Congress organization in this province, except in some localities, has no mass basis. The evil of bogus membership and factional struggle for the control of the Congress Committees and local self-governing bodies is as rampant in Bengal as in the rest of the country. It is long since we began talking about pushing forward the mass contact programme. The BPCC and every district Congress Committee have their mass contact committees. But mere telling the masses to come into the Congress would not bring them in it. If the mass contact programme of the Congress is to make headway, it must first of all make contact with the interests of the masses. Mr Roy hit the nail on the head when he pointed out that if the communalist propaganda of the supporters of the present Ministry has succeeded in keeping the Muslim masses and the scheduled castes away from the Congress, that is at least equally due to the failure of the Congress, to bid for the confidence of the masses by advocating a more radical agrarian programme. Is it not due to the fact that the BPCC, the Bengal Congress Assembly Party and the present Congress leadership in Bengal are influenced by interests hostile to any bold programme of agrarian reforms? If the Bengal Congress wants to extend its mass basis, it must stand for a programme of thoroughgoing agrarian revolution.

93. On the League Deputation: S. Kitchlew to Rajendra Prasad, 21 May 1939

Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 3P, 1939, NAI.

I am writing these lines to draw your attention to a very serious problem that is agitating the minds of our workers in this province and which I think is worrying the workers in other provinces also. You know a deputation of the Muslim League is touring our province these days. Wherever the members of the deputation go they make provocative speeches inciting Muslims against the Congress by relating baseless stories and so-called atrocities committed on Muslims by the Congress governments. I do not know how far the deputation will succeed in its attempts to vilify the Congress, but it is bound to create some misunderstanding against the Congress, and therefore we must do something to counteract. I suggest that a counter-deputation of prominent Muslims from Congress provinces should tour non-Congress provinces. Members of the deputation should be intelligent and learned people who can create good impression on the masses. If you can arrange to send such a deputation it will prove of great help to us. I am sure Provincial Congress Committees of Congress provinces can help us by giving two or three persons from each province. I would request you to move into the matter at your earliest convenience as we are anxious that such a deputation should come as soon as possible.

PS

In case you can not arrange such a deputation, have you objection to my corresponding with the Provincial Congress Committees direct?

Rajendra Prasad to S. Kitchlew

Camp Ranchi
27 May 1939

I have received your letter dated 21st May suggesting that a deputation of the prominent Muslims from Congress Provinces should tour non-Congress Provinces for explaining to the Muslims what Congress Ministries have been doing and for removing misapprehensions and misunderstandings which may have been created among the Muslims there. It seems to me that such a step would appear to be inspired by a desire to counteract the effect of propaganda of the Muslim League and as such would be looked upon with suspicion by the very people to whom it is expected to affect, specially if it goes immediately after the Deputation which is now touring on behalf of the Muslim League. But we might consider the sending of such a deputation a little later and you may in the meanwhile find out the men who may be placed for the consideration of the Working Committee.

94. UP Conference of Majlis-i-Ahrar

Hindustan Times, 1 and 3 June 1939.

[This is a report of the UP Ahrar Conference held at Meerut. Over 10,000 Muslims from the Province attended.]

1 June 1939

...Hakim Ahmad Rashid Zeba read the welcome speech. He analysed the Islamic teachings, particularly in reference to the political situation in the country, and said that it was absolutely false to say that the Congress was a Hindu organization. Further, that it was the duty of the Muslims to liberate India. If they could not do so alone, it was incumbent upon them to labour towards that end in cooperation with other communities.

Maulana Faqhri¹ in the course of his presidential speech, which he delivered extempore, put in a spirited plea for unity amongst all communities inhabiting India, for that alone could lead them on the road to freedom and prosperity. After referring briefly to the history of the Ahrars, the President said that they aimed at serving the humanity and at achieving the independence of the country and Islam.

Misleading and mischievous propaganda, said the President, was being carried against the Ahrars by their rivals and efforts were being made to prevent the masses from hearing their message. But, added Maulana Faqhri, no amount of obstacles put in their way by their rivals would deter them from their path of duty. They would continue to strive to carry their message to the people and would surely succeed in their mission.

If the Muslim League, proceeded Maulana Faqhri, had any real and honest intention it must give up all mischievous propaganda and activities and must work for the liberation of Mother India, the community and Islam, as the Ahrars and the Congress Muslims were doing. If they wanted to come into our fold with honest and sincere motives they were welcome. But let them understand clearly that our path was not strewn with roses. There was risk at every step. Jails and deaths were there in every move of ours. If they wanted to come to crush our spirit of freedom they would surely have no room. It was possible that they might succeed once or twice in their ulterior motives, but ultimately the victory would be ours, who had been on the right path.

Continuing, the President severely criticized British Imperialism, and said that it aimed at dividing the two great communities of this country and that it had often succeeded in doing so. But, added the Maulana, whenever critical hours had come both the communities had united and worked in close cooperation as in the 1857 War of Independence, and a time would surely come

when they would again unite for the achievement of their common objective. They had only to be aware of such persons who made their appearance on the surface at times to assert their leadership and vanished when the hour of trial came.

If the Muslims will follow the Jamiyat al-ulema and the Majlis-I-Ahrar-I Islam and stand shoulder to shoulder with the Hindus in the battle for India's freedom, they would surely be able to live honourably and with their heads up in this country; otherwise, they are doomed for ever. Thus remarked Maulana Hifzur Rehman in the course of his speech which he delivered at the third and concluding session of the Provincial Majlis-I-Ahrar Conference.

Speaking to the Muslims on their plight and remedies for coming out of the same, the Maulana analyzed the past and present developments in the political sphere in the country. He blamed the history books, concocted in Fort William at Calcutta which contained nothing but falsehood from one end to another, for creating divisions and dissensions amongst the Hindus and the Muslims. The Maulana asked the people not to be bankrupt in common sense and to understand realities and to work in cooperation with each other for their liberty.

Their differences with the Muslim League, said the Maulana, were only on one point. The League held Hindus responsible for all the miseries of the Muslims and accused them of usurping their rights and privileges. The ignorant Muslims believed in them. But it was not really so. The facts were otherwise. "We, on our part, hold British Imperialism instrumental for all that. It pats and instigates the Hindus for striking at our rights and privileges for political motives". Our right, proceeded the speaker, is therefore against British imperialism.

... For liberating the motherland from the foreign yoke (Muslims) must walk over to the platform of the Indian National Congress, for the Congress alone had worked for India's independence and would bring the same to it. The Congress was rapidly advancing towards its goal. No one could check its onward march—not even Gandhiji, Subhas or Jawahar, if they desired so. Congress was only of those and for those who wanted to be in the vanguard with the tri-colour. India's freedom was bound to come. It was only a matter of time...

¹ Maulvi S. Shah Mohammad Shahid Faqhri (1901–75); associated with the Jamiyat-al-Ulama-I Hind and with Congress movement in Allahabad, where he was President of the city and district Congress committees; represented the Congress in the UP Assembly (1952, 1964) and the Council (1958).

95. Bengal Provincial Ulama Conference

'Ulama Conference Scene', *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 4 June 1939.

Calcutta
3 June 1939

Organized hooliganism on the part of the Muslim Leaguers disturbed at stages the proceedings of the Bengal Ulama Conference, which met on Saturday afternoon at the Hall of the Calcutta University Institute.

Demonstrations were staged in and outside the Institute. While, outside in the street, as the police watched on, the League 'volunteers' carrying flags and sticks shouted slogans, their compatriots inside the hall tried to howl down the speakers. At a certain stage the rowdies became so obnoxious that Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, the President, thoroughly disgusted, refused to proceed with his address.

Before the conference started, the Muslim Leaguers held a meeting at the Mohammed Ali Park denouncing the organizers. As the proceedings of the conference went on, batch after batch passed before the University Institute shouting their usual slogans.

Rising amid cheers, Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi began to deliver his address. Indian National Congress, he remarked, should be the main political body of India. All other political bodies should be amalgamated into the Congress.

‘No, no, never’, cried out the infuriated reactionaries. The Maulana requested them to listen to him calmly and on their failure to do so left the hall.

96. Congress Reforms

Bombay Chronicle, 9 June 1939.

9 June 1939

The Constitution Sub-Committee, which was appointed by the last AICC meeting and which met in Bombay during the last four or five days, has suggested a pretty large number of alterations in the Congress Constitution with a view to preventing in the future the malpractices that have crept into the Congress during the last few years. [see enclosure: 1] Some of the changes suggested are very radical, indeed, though much depends upon the actual enforcement of the new rules. Many of the changes relate to the enrolment of members and elections as it is with regard to these activities that the existing rules are being grossly abused or evaded. The new rules make enrolment stricter by, among other ways, requiring the enrolment to be attested by a witness. Bogus voting will be checked appreciably by the rule which permits a person to vote only on production of his certificate of membership. An additional qualification has been prescribed for a candidate for election as a delegate to the Congress or as a member of a provincial or district Congress committee, namely that the candidate must have been a member of the Congress for three consecutive years at the time of election, provided that for elections in 1939 and 1940 the executive of the Provincial Committee may grant exemptions from the operation of the rule in special cases. We trust the exemptions will not be so many as virtually to nullify the rule.

A far more radical change is proposed in the Article which at present disqualifies a person from being a member of any elected Congress Committee if he is a member of a communal organization whose activities are, in the opinion of the Working Committee, anti-national and in conflict with those of the Congress. It is now proposed to extend the disqualification to other organizations whose activities are as objectionable. The extension is quite consistent with the principle of the Article. It cannot be contended that only communal bodies are likely to be objectionable. One can easily imagine several non-communal bodies whose activities are anti-national and in conflict with those of the Congress. Pandit Jawaharlal observes that ‘logically he appreciates the reason for the change suggested’ but fears that ‘in the atmosphere of today such a change is likely to be misconstrued and may lead to wrong results.’ The fear is not altogether unjustified. It is true that wrong results will follow only if the Working Committee abuses its discretionary power. Acharya Narendra Deo says that the new provision places large powers in the hands of the Working Committee for banning class organizations or political groups and parties within the Congress. It must be assumed that the power will not be abused but it is a wise practice in democratic organizations not to arm the executive with very wide powers; for such powers may, in some circumstances, tempt even a body of angels to make wrong use of it. As Pandit Jawaharlal says, even in the absence of a rule like the one in question, the Congress has the inherent power to keep out of its committees persons whose activities are in conflict with its own. Far greater caution is necessary in banning institution than in disqualifying individuals.

Another radical change is in the election of the AICC members. At present all the members are elected by all the delegates assembled at a meeting by the single transferable vote. But the change proposed is as follows: Two thirds of the number of the seats shall be filled territorially by

the delegates from areas fixed by the executive of the Provincial Congress Committee electing them by single distributive vote. The remaining one third of the number of seats shall be filled by all the delegates in the Province assembled at the meeting and voting according to the method of proportional representation by single transferable vote. In so far as the seats are distributed among different areas according to their membership and thus prevent any considerable area being virtually disfranchised, the change is decidedly an improvement. But we cannot appreciate the change of the single transferable vote to a large extent to the single distributive vote. The former method has the great merit of ensuring fair representation to minorities without the irrational device of reservation of seats. The new method will deprive minorities of that advantage. We agree that the Congress executive, central or local, should be homogeneous and such an executive can be secured only by the single distributive vote. But the AICC is essentially a deliberative body and it ought to ensure fair representation to important minorities. We would endorse Acharya Narendra Deo's view that 'various political groups within the Congress should have the fullest opportunity to influence and mould the policy of the Congress and as the AICC also functions as the Subjects Committee for the Open Session, political groups which are in a minority today will certainly not be in a position to influence the decisions of the Congress when the new rule is put into operations.'

[Enclosure: I]

Constitution of the Indian National Congress (As amended by the Bombay Meeting of the AICC, June 1939)

Article I: Object

The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment by the people of India Purna Swaraj (Complete Independence) by all legitimate and peaceful means.

Article II: Constituents

The Indian National Congress will comprise:

- (1) Primary members enrolled under Article III
- (2) Village, Ward, Town, Taluk, Thana, Mandal, Tahsil, Sub-division, District, or other local Committees
- (3) Provincial Congress Committees
- (4) Annual Session of the Committees
- (5) All India Congress Committee
- (6) Working Committee

and may comprise (a) committees or associations directly organized by the All India Congress Committee or the Working Committee, and (b) committees organized by any provincial Congress committee in accordance with the rules framed by it in that behalf and approved by the Working Committee.

Article III: Membership

- (a) Any person of the age of 18 years and over who believes in Article I shall, on making a written declaration to that effect attested by a witness and presenting an application in form A annexed hereto and on payment of four annas, become a primary member of the Congress and be entitled to be placed on the register of Congress members kept at any office duly authorized in that behalf within the district in which he ordinarily resides or carries on business:

Provided that no person shall be a primary member of more than one committee at the same time.

- (b) The application shall be handed in personally or sent by post or messenger.
- (c) It shall state the full name, father's name, or, in case of a married woman, husband's name, age, sex and occupation of the applicant, as also the village, the taluka, the district and the province in which he ordinarily resides or carries on business.
- (d) The official receiving the application shall note on it the date of receipt, serial number and such other particulars as may be prescribed and shall send it to the office of the District Congress Committee concerned for record.
- (e) The applicant, on being enrolled, shall receive a certificate of membership as per Form C annexed hereto, either in the language and script of the province in which he resides or in the Hindustani language written in Devanagari or Urdu script.
- (f) Unless otherwise directed by the Working Committee the year for the membership fee shall be reckoned from January 1 to December 31 and there shall be no reduction in the subscription to be paid by members joining in the course of the year.

Article IV: Renewal of Membership

- (a) A member of the Congress enrolled as per Article III shall continue to be a member of the Congress until he resigns or is expelled therefrom, provided he renews his application and pays on or before the 31st of August of every subsequent year the annual membership fee of four annas and obtains a certificate of membership. The application for renewal shall contain the name, the father's name, or, in case of a married woman, husband's name and the place of residence of the applicant in the prescribed Form B. The official receiving such application for renewal and subscription shall make a note to that effect in the Register of members.
- (b) The name of any member failing to make the application and to pay the annual membership fee within the prescribed time shall be removed from the register of members.

Article V: Membership Register

Every district Congress Committee shall maintain a permanent register of members enrolled for each constituency within the district showing the names and particulars required by Article III(c) in which shall be noted from year to year the fact whether a renewal application has been made or not and the membership fee paid or not.

Article VI: Provinces

- (a) The following shall be the provinces with the headquarters mentioned against them:

<i>Province</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>
1. Ajmer-Merwara	Hindustani	Ajmer
2. Andhra	Telugu	Madras
3. Assam	Assamese	Gauhati
4. Bihar	Hindustani	Patna
5. Bengal	Bengali	Calcutta
6. Bombay (City)	Marathi and Gujarati	Bombay
7. Delhi	Hindustani	Delhi
8. Gujarat	Gujarati	Ahmedabad
9. Karnataka	Kannada	Dharwar

(Contd.)

<i>Province</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>
10. Kerala	Malayalam	Calicut
11. Mahakoshal	Hindustani	Jubbulpore
12. Maharashtra	Marathi	Poona
13. Nagpur	Marathi	Nagpur
14. NWF Province	Pushtu	Peshawar
15. Punjab	Panjabi	Lahore
16. Sind	Sindhi	Karachi
17. Tamil Nadu	Tamil	Madras
18. United Provinces	Hindustani	Lucknow
19. Utkal	Oriya	Cuttack
20. Vidarbha (Berar)	Marathi	Akola

- (b) A provincial Congress Committee with the previous sanction of the Working Committee shall have the power to change its headquarters from time to time.
- (c) The Working Committee may, after ascertaining the wishes of the Provincial Congress or committees concerned, constitute a new province or assign to a province, a district or portions of a district from another province as also to assign an Indian State or States or parts thereof, to any province.

Article VII: Qualifications

- (a) No member shall be entitled to exercise his vote at any election unless he has been continuously on a Congress register for 12 months prior to the date of the election and only on production of a certificate of membership.

Provided however that in the case of elections to the newly formed primary Congress Committee, a member shall be entitled to vote, even if he has been a member only for three months, for the election of the committee's office-bearers.

Note: The condition of 12 months' continuous membership will not apply to voters in the current year, that is, 1939. To them will apply the old condition of three months' continuous membership prior to the date of the elections.

- (b) No member even if he is qualified under clause (a) hereof, shall be eligible for election to an office of any primary committee or to membership of any elective committee, unless he is a habitual wearer wholly of handspun and handwoven Khaddar, provided that at the time of offering himself for such elections he is not a member of any parallel committee;
- (c) No member even if he is qualified under clauses (a) and (b) shall be eligible as a delegate to the Congress or as a member of a Provincial or a District Congress Committee, unless he has been a member of the Congress for three constructive years at the time of the election, provided that at the time of offering himself for such election he is not a member of any other parallel committee:

Provided further that it shall be open to the Executive of the Provincial Congress Committee to grant an exemption in favour of any person regarding the aforesaid qualification for elections in 1939 and 1940.

- (d) No person who is a member of a communal organization, the object or programme of which involves political activities which are, in the opinion of the Working Committee, anti-national and in conflict with those of the Congress shall be eligible for election to any office or membership of any elective Congress Committee.

Article VIII: Election Tribunals

- (a) The Executive of the Provincial Congress Committee shall unanimously, or by a majority of at least three-fourths of its members, appoint yearly a Provincial Election Tribunal, no member of which shall stand as a candidate for election as a delegate or to any office or membership of an elective Congress Committee in the province, during the term of his office. The Provincial Election Tribunal shall appoint one or more persons to constitute a District Tribunal in each district, to receive and decide disputes relating to enrolment of members, preparation or maintenance of register of members and election of delegates and office-bearers and members of elective committees, provided that no person so appointed shall be a candidate for election during his term of office:

Provided that it shall not be necessary to appoint a District Tribunal in the Provinces of Bombay, Delhi and Ajmer-Merwara, and provided further that if there is no District Tribunal appointed in any other province for any reason whatsoever, objections will be filed before and disposed of by the Provincial Election Tribunal.

- (b) If any provincial executive fails to appoint, by a date specified by the Working Committee, the Provincial Election Tribunal, the Working Committee shall appoint one.
- (c) No person who is a dealer in foreign cloth or British goods or who carries on trade in liquor or who is addicted to drink shall be eligible for election to an executive office or elective committee of the Congress.

Article IX: Objections to the Rolls

- (a) The register of members shall be brought up to date on or before the 15th September every year and shall be open to inspection by the members of the Congress at the office where it is kept from 16th to 23rd September.
- (b) Any person whose name is omitted from the register of members, or who objects to the entry of any name therein, may submit an objection in writing, stating the reasons for challenging such entry on omission to the District Tribunal on or before the 30th September.
- (c) The District Tribunal will, after hearing the objection and any other party concerned, may direct any name to be entered into or omitted from the Register as the case may be on or before the 10th October.
- (d) The District Tribunal shall maintain a record of all proceedings before it and a copy of its order directing any amendment in the Register shall be forwarded by it to the District Congress Committee concerned and the District Congress Committee shall amend the Register where required in accordance therewith. The Register, after such amendment, if any, shall be final, except for any change rendered necessary by disciplinary action taken against any member by a competent authority.

Article X: Election of Delegates

- (a) Every Provincial Congress Committee shall prepare a roll of its primary members qualified to vote and shall send to the AICC office a statement in regard to it, on or before a date fixed by the Working Committee. This statement shall be in the form prescribed by the AICC office and shall give separately the number of urban and rural members in each district.
- (b) Members included in the said roll shall alone be entitled to vote at the election of delegates in that province.

- (c) In the event of a Provincial Congress Committee failing to furnish the statement in time, the province concerned may be disentitled to elect its delegates.
- (d) On receipt of the aforesaid statement, the Working Committee shall fix the date by which the election of delegates must be held.
- (e) Provincial Committees shall divide the Province into fixed territorial constituencies.
- (f) Every province shall be entitled to return a number of delegates at the rate of one delegate for every one lac of the inhabitants of such province including the Indian states or agencies therein, or a fraction thereof, in accordance with the last Census.

Proviso I—Bombay(City) shall have a maximum quota of 25 delegates, and the province of Delhi shall have a maximum quota of 15 delegates.

- (g) (i) Each district shall be entitle to elect nor more than one delegate for each lac of its population provided that for every delegate to be elected, there are not less than 500 primary members that for every delegate to be elected, there are not less than 500 primary members enrolled during the year (ii) The number of delegates remaining unallotted to the constituencies on account of the inclusion of the population of Indian States in any Province, shall be distributed by the executive of the PCC concerned, in such manner as in its opinion would meet the requirements of the case subject to the rule of minimum enrolment of 500 primary members for each delegate.
- (h) The province which has not completed its election on or before the date appointed by the Working Committee, may at the discretion of the Working Committee be disentitled to be represented at the Annual Session.
- (i) A certified list of delegates shall be submitted by the Provincial Congress Committee, not later than the date fixed by the Working Committee in that behalf.
- (j) Every delegate so elected shall, on payment of a few of Rs 5 at the office of the Provincial Congress Committee of his province, receive a certificate in accordance with Form D hereto annexed, duly signed by one of its secretaries. No delegate who has not paid the fee shall be entitled to exercise any of his function.

Article XI: Election Disputes

- (a) It will be open to any member of the Congress within a constituency to lodge a complaint about an election within the constituency before the District Tribunal within seven days of the declaration of the result of such election and the District Tribunal shall decide the complaint.
- (b) Until the election is set aside by the District Tribunal the person elected shall be deemed to have been duly elected.
- (c) An appeal shall lie to the Provincial Election Tribunal against any order passed by the District Tribunal within seven days of the passing of such order.

The order of Provincial Election Tribunal shall be final.

- (d) The Working Committee may lay down rules for the conduct of elections and lodging and disposal of objections and complaints and appeals.
- (e) The Provincial Tribunal shall, on its own motion or on report by a District Tribunal, have the power to direct that any person found guilty of misconduct in connection with enrolment of members, maintenance of register of members, election or lodging of a false objection or complaint, knowing it to be so, shall be disqualified from standing as a candidate for election or be expelled from the Congress for such period as it may consider just and proper. An appeal shall lie to the Working Committee from any order passed by the Provincial Election Tribunal under this clause.

Article XII: AICC Elections

- (a) The delegates in every province shall assemble in a meeting to elect, from among themselves, one-eighth of their number as representatives of the province on the All India Congress Committee; provided that no province shall have less than five representatives on the All India Congress Committee, except Delhi which shall have four.
- (b) The election in sub-clause (a) shall be by provincial representation by single transferable vote.
- (c) The Secretaries of the respective Provincial Congress Committee shall issue certificates of membership of the All India Congress Committee to the persons elected to it.

Article XIII: Provincial Congress Committee

- (a) The Provincial Congress Committee in each province shall consist of the delegates from the province. In case the number of such delegates is less than 30, any number required to make the number of members of the Provincial Congress Committee 30 will be elected in such manner as the Constitution of the province may determine, provided that in the case of Sind and Nagpur the number may be increased by the PCC to not more than 50 and in the case of Vidarbha 45 and Delhi 40. In addition to these, the President and ex-Presidents of the Congress, resident in the province and duly qualified under Articles III and VII, shall also be members of the Provincial Congress Committee.
- (b) Every Provincial Congress Committee shall
 - (i) subject to the general control and supervision of the All India Congress Committee, be in charge of the affairs of the Congress within its own province and to that end frame rules not inconsistent with this Constitution, which rules shall come into operation only with the previous sanction of the Working Committee;
 - (ii) subject an annual report of the Congress organization and the work in the province to the Working Committee not later than one month before the commencement of the Annual Session;
 - (iii) before the new All India Congress Committee meets as Subjects Committee under Article XVI, pay to the Working Committee the fees received from the delegates. Any other subscription that may be fixed by the latter, having regard to the population, membership and financial capacity of the province, shall be paid not later than the end of June every year. Delegates and members of the All India Congress Committee from provinces in default shall not be permitted to take part in any of the proceedings of the Congress or any committee thereof.
- (c) (i) No Provincial Congress Committee and no subordinate committee shall be recognized by the Working Committee unless it has complied with the conditions laid down in this Constitution or any rules framed thereunder by the Working Committee; (ii) On failure on the part of any Provincial Congress Committee to function in terms of the Constitution, the Working Committee may form one, to carry on Congress work in that province.

Article XIV: Annual Session

- (a) The Annual Session of the Congress shall be held at the time and place decided upon at the preceding Session. The AICC or the Working Committee may, however, for sufficient reason change either the venue or the date or both of the Session.

- (b) The Annual Session shall consist of
 - (i) the President of the Congress;
 - (ii) the ex-Presidents of the Congress, provided they are duly qualified under Articles III and VII;
 - (iii) the delegates elected under Article X.
- (c) The Provincial Congress Committee concerned shall make such arrangements for holding the Annual Session as may be deemed necessary, and for this purpose shall form a Reception Committee, and may include therein persons who are not its members.
- (d) The Reception Committee shall collect funds for the expenses of the session, make all necessary arrangements for the reception and accommodation of delegates and visitors, and for the printing of the reports of the proceedings of the session.
- (e) The receipts and disbursements of the Reception Committee shall be audited by an auditor or auditors appointed by the Provincial Congress Committee concerned, and the statement of accounts together with the auditor's report shall be submitted by the Provincial Congress Committee to the Working Committee, not later than three months after the termination of the Annual Session. Any surplus funds remaining with the Reception Committee shall be divided equally between the All India Congress Committee and the Provincial Congress Committee.
- (f) The Reception Committee shall elect its Chairman and other office-bearers from amongst its own members.

Article XV: Election of President

- (a) Any ten delegates may jointly send the name of any delegates or ex-president of the Congress duly qualified under Articles III and VII, whom they purpose to be elected President of the next Annual Session of the Congress, so as to reach the General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee on or before a date to be fixed by the Working Committee.
- (b) The General Secretary will public the names of all persons so proposed and it will be open to any person, whose name has been so proposed, to withdraw his candidature by informing the General Secretary of his intention to do so, within 10 days of the publication of the proposed names.
- (c) After eliminating the name of any person who has withdrawn, the General Secretary shall publish the name of the remaining candidates and circulate them to the Provincial Congress Committees.
- (d) On a date fixed by the Working Committee, each delegate in a province shall be entitled to record his vote in favour of one of the candidates for the Presidentship of the Congress, at a place to be fixed by the Provincial Congress Committee.
- (e) The Provincial Congress Committee shall report to the All India Congress Committee office the number of valid votes recorded in favour of each candidate.
- (f) As soon as may be after the receipt of the report the General Secretary shall announce as President-elect the name of the candidate obtaining the largest number of votes, provided that such candidate has secured not less than 50 per cent of the votes polled.
- (g) In case he does not get the requisite number of votes the delegates in each province shall, on a date fixed by the General Secretary, elect one out of the two persons getting the highest number of votes at the previous election and the General Secretary shall on receipt of the report from the Provincial Congress Committee of the number of votes

recorded at the second election, declare the person getting the higher number of votes as the duly elected President of the Congress.

- (h) In the event of an emergency arising by reason of any cause such as death or resignation of the President elected as above, the General Secretary shall forthwith fix a date for a fresh election by the delegates as prescribed above. In case such procedure is found not possible, the All India Congress Committee shall elect the President.

Article XVI: Subject Committee

- (a) The new All India Congress Committee shall meet as Subjects Committee, under the President-elect at least two days before the Annual Session. The outgoing Working Committee presided over by the President-elect, shall submit to it the draft programme of the work for the session including resolutions recommended by the different Provincial Congress Committees.
- (b) The Subjects Committee shall proceed to discuss the programme and shall frame resolutions for being moved in the open session. At least one day shall be allotted for the consideration of propositions of which due notice has been given by the Provincial Congress Committees or members of the All India Congress Committee other than Resolutions recommended by the Working Committee, in accordance with the rules prescribed in that behalf.

Article XVII: Congress Session

At each sitting of the Congress, the order in which business shall be transacted shall be as follows:

- (i) The resolutions recommended for adoption by the Subjects Committee.
- (ii) Any substantive motion not included in (i) and which 25 delegates request the President in writing, before the Commencement of the day's sitting, to be allowed to place before the Congress; provided, however, that no such motion shall be allowed unless it has been previously discussed at a meeting of the Subjects Committee and has received the support of at least a third of the members then present.

Article XVIII: Special Session

- (a) The Working Committee may upon its own motion, or shall upon a joint requisition addressed to it, as provided in Article XIX(e), convene a meeting of the All India Congress Committee for considering a resolution for holding a Special Session. Such resolution shall be effective if passed by the two-thirds majority of the members present. Thereupon the Working Committee shall summon a Special Session of the Congress, at such time and place as it shall determine and the Articles of the Constitution shall apply with such modifications as the Working Committee may consider necessary, provided that the delegates of the preceding session shall be elected by the delegates in the manner prescribed in Article XV.

Article XIX: All India Congress Committee

- (a) The President of the Annual Session, members of the All India Congress Committee elected under Article XII, and the ex-Presidents of the Congress, provided they are qualified under Articles III and VII, and the Treasurer of the Congress shall constitute the All India Congress Committee.

- (b) The All India Congress Committee shall carry out the programme of work laid down by the Congress from session to session and deal with all new matters that may arise during its term of office.
- (c) The All India Congress Committee shall have the power to frame rules not inconsistent with this Constitution, for regulating all matters connected with the Congress.
- (d) The President of the Annual Session shall be the Chairman of the All India Congress Committee.
- (e) The All India Congress Committee shall meet as often as required by the Working Committee, or on a joint requisition addressed to the Working Committee, by not less than 24 members. Such requisition shall specify the purpose for which the requisitionists desire a meeting of the All India Congress Committee. At such meeting additional items of business may be brought up for consideration, provided due notice thereof has been given to the members. At least one full day shall be allotted for the consideration of propositions of which due notice has been given by members of the AICC in accordance with the rules prescribed in that behalf.
- (f) Forty or one-third of the total number of members, whichever is less, shall form the quorum.
- (g) The All India Congress Committee shall hold office till the meeting of the new All India Congress Committee immediately before the next Annual Session.
- (h) The All India Congress Committee may from time to time affiliate to the Congress such organizations as it may deem necessary provided such organizations are calculated to further or assist the object of the Congress.
- (i) Every member of the All India Congress Committee, *ex-officio* or elected, shall pay an annual subscription of Rs 10 payable at or before the first meeting of the All India Congress Committee. Members in default will not be permitted to take part in any meeting of the All India Congress Committee, the Subjects Committee, or in any session.

Article XX: Working Committee

- (a) The Working Committee shall consist of the President of the Congress, thirteen members including not more than three General Secretaries appointed by the President from amongst the members of the All India Congress Committee, and a Treasurer appointed by him from amongst the delegates.
- (b) The Working Committee shall be the executive authority and as such shall have the power to carry into effect the policy and programme laid down by the All India Congress Committee and the Congress, and shall remain responsible thereto.
- (c) The Working Committee shall place, before every meeting of the All India Congress Committee, the reports of its proceedings and the agenda of the meeting and shall assign at least one clear day for resolutions of which due notice may have been given by the members of the All India Congress Committee, other than those of the Working Committee, in accordance with the rules prescribed in that behalf.
- (d) The Working Committee shall appoint one or more inspectors to examine the records, papers and account books of all Congress organizations, which shall furnish all information and give to the inspectors access to all offices and records.
- (e) The Working Committee shall have the power:
 - (i) To frame rules and issue instructions for the proper working of the Constitution and in all matters not otherwise provided for,

- (ii) To superintend, direct and control all Congress Committees,
- (iii) To take such disciplinary action at it may deem fit against a committee or individual for misconduct, willful neglect or default.
- (f) The Working Committee shall pay to the Provincial Congress Committee convening the Annual Session, one-fifth of the fees recovered from the delegates, within a fortnight of the termination of the session.
- (g) The Working Committee shall take steps to have a regular audit of the accounts of the Provincial Congress Committees.

Article XXI: Funds

The Treasurer shall be in charge of the funds of the Congress and shall keep proper accounts of all investments, income and expenditure.

Article XXII: General Secretaries

- (a) The General Secretaries shall be in the office of the All India Congress Committee and the Working Committee.
- (b) The General Secretaries shall be responsible for the publication of the report of the proceedings of the Annual or Special Session in cooperation with the Provincial Committee concerned. Such report shall be published as soon as possible and not later than four months after the Session.
- (c) The General Secretaries shall prepare the report of the work of the All India Congress Committee and the Working Committee during their period of office and submit it, with a full account of the funds which may have come into their hands, to the meeting of the All India Congress Committee immediately before the Annual Session.

Article XXIII: Vacancies

The office of a delegate or a member of the All India Congress Committee or a Provincial Congress Committee shall be vacated by resignation, death or prolonged absence from India and such vacancy shall be filled by the Provincial Congress Committee concerned in the same manner in which the vacating member was chosen. A vacancy on the Working Committee shall be filled by the President.

Article XXIV: Fractions

Where there is a question of considering the value of fractions, a fraction of one-half or more shall be treated as one, and less than one-half as zero.

Article XXV: Language

- (a) The proceedings of the Congress, the All India Congress Committee and the Working Committee shall ordinarily be conducted in Hindustani. The English language or any provincial language may be used if the speaker is unable to speak in Hindustani or whenever permitted by the President.
- (b) The proceedings of the Provincial Congress Committee shall ordinarily be conducted in the language of the province concerned. Hindustani may also be used.



97. Congress Working Committee: Constitution Sub-Committee's Report

Leader, 24 June 1939.

22 June 1939

The Congress Working Committee discussed the constitution sub-committee's report again today, though it had approved of the report in principle at its yesterday's meeting. Mahatma Gandhi was present at this morning's sitting.

The proposed amendment to clause 5(c) of the Congress constitution, seeking to exclude such Congressmen as were office-bearers of any communal or other organizations from holding any executive office in the Congress organization was again discussed today in the light of the objections raised by Jawaharlal Nehru, and other leftists, some of whom interpreted this amendment as an attempt to ban groups within the Congress organization. It was pointed out that the Working Committee had agreed that office-bearers of organizations whose programme and policy were opposed to those of the Congress should be excluded from holding offices in the Congress organizations. But the committee held that this was not meant to penalize differences of opinion among the genuine Congressmen themselves. It was explained at this morning's sitting of the committee on behalf of the sponsors of this amendment that the object of this amendment was only to keep out those persons who by capturing the Congress machinery tried to propagate their policies and programmes which were opposed to those of the Congress. The Working Committee had no intention whatever to discriminate against those Congressmen who differed from the majority regarding the methods and were trying to convert the majority to their view point. What the committee now was trying to do was to introduce such phraseology in the clause as to be effective to achieve the object mentioned above.

The amendment to clause 7 of the Congress constitution suggesting change of method of election and introduction of territorial constituencies with single distributive votes in place of single transferable votes was also discussed again, but it is understood that it was generally agreed that so far as this amendment was concerned the constitution sub-committee's recommendation might be accepted as it was.

The committee decided that the strength of the Working Committees of the provincial Congress committees should not be more than 25 per cent of the total strength of the provincial Congress committees concerned.

Since his arrival in Bombay Subhas Chandra Bose has been busy informally conferring with the leftist elements of the Congress and discussing ways and means for consolidating the leftist forces in the Congress.

Two alternative schemes have, it is understood, been discussed at these informal meetings which were attended by the representatives of the Congress Socialist Party, Communist Party, Royist party and some members of the Kisan Sabha.

The first scheme is that an All-India leftist consolidation committee should be formed with equal or more representation on the committee for various groups for the purpose of initiating resolutions in the Congress, getting amendments passed by AICC and for generally giving a leftist bent to the Congress politics.

The second scheme suggested the formation of a Forward Bloc committee with equal or more representation for various leftist groups for the same purpose as mentioned above.

Whatever is the ultimate name given to this leftist organization, it is understood, it has been generally agreed among the various groups that the decisions of this new leftist organization should be by agreement among its members and not by votes.

The leftists are meeting Subhas Bose again this evening when it is expected they will come to a final decision with regard to the name of the leftist organization.

Certain tentative decisions with regard to 'the consolidation' and formation of the Forward Bloc are reported to have been arrived at a resumed informal conference of some leftist leaders under the presidency of Subhas Bose.

It is understood that a sub-committee will be appointed to draft a detailed constitution for the Forward Bloc.

The membership of the Forward Bloc, it is learnt, will be extended only to the office-holders in all elective Congress committees and in regard to labour and Trade Union organizations the elected office-bearers of such bodies will be co-opted. For the time being the primary members of the Congress will not be permitted to become members of the Bloc.

Various leftist parties such as the Socialists, Communists, Royists, etc., which comprise the Forward Bloc will be allowed to retain their individuality, that is, those parties will not be liquidated by merging in to the Forward Bloc. All parties will have equal representation in the Forward Bloc. To begin with the Bloc will start from having district committees only.

98. Minorities Must Remain

Congress Socialist, 25 June 1939.

25 June 1939

The reported decision of the Congress Working Committee to drop amendment to Article 5. (c) of the Congress Constitution will be welcomed by all. The majority in the Constitution Sub-Committee appointed by the AICC at Calcutta to suggest amendments calculated to rid the Congress organization of corruption went out of its way to put non-communal organizations on the same footing as communal bodies. Membership of such organizations was sought to be penalized. Their members were sought to be prevented from 'election to any office or membership to any elected Congress Committee.'

Clearly this change has nothing to do with corruption in the Congress. The majority that accepted this change obviously had in its mind the growing influence of organized *kisans* and workers in the national struggle and were afraid that the process of radicalization that the Congress had been undergoing due to its impact with the broad forces of struggle in the country would further be accelerated. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru himself saw the danger in the contemplated change when he said in his minute of dissent that 'this widens the scope of the clause and it is possible that this new addition might be mis-used to some extent.'

Acharya Narendra Dev further elucidated Pandit Nehru's mis-apprehensions. He stated in the course of his dissenting Note: 'The Clause as amended is further liable to be misused as it places large powers in the hands of the Working Committee in banning class organizations or political groups and parties within the Congress. Such a demand has already been made in certain quarters and it would appear as if the proposed change is being recommended to satisfy that demand.... It would be highly improper to prevent Congressmen from participating in class organizations whose political objective is the same as that of the Congress, but whose economic programme may not for the moment be identical with that of the Congress.... If ever any action is taken against such class organization under the amended clause it would lead to disastrous results. It would not only further lead to discord and dis-harmony in the Congress ranks, but will alienate other anti-Imperialist organizations from the Congress.'

Despite whatever explanations that those who accepted the change might have had to offer, it is indisputable that the advocates of the change were guided by their class prejudices. The change

if incorporated in the Congress Constitution would have kept that organization a close preserve of people who are against revolutionary development of our anti-imperialist struggle. Inevitably such an organization must deteriorate and ultimately resile from its revolutionary basis and recede towards sterility.

When the change was made public it evoked tremendous opposition not only from organized workers and peasants, but also from those other Congressmen who have not given up their revolutionary perspective and who stand by the basic policy of revolutionary anti-Imperialist struggle. It is good news that the Working Committee has taken cognizance of the wide-spread opposition to this change and has responded to the general demand by dropping the proposed change.

If the same sense of goodwill and accommodation becomes the general guiding principle of the Working Committee it cannot but drop the other proposed change in the system of election to the AICC. The present system of proportional representation has never been the source of corruption. The change now proposed will, on the other hand, bring into the organization a new element of corruption. In their eagerness to shut out elements that do not agree with them, the present majority in the Congress may seek to deprive these elements of their natural democratic right to mould the Congress policy and programme and influence its decisions. To persist in this proposed change in the system of election to the AICC will be gross folly.

It will keep out of the AICC those very elements which constitute its vitalizing force. Their elimination must inevitably bring certain amount of stagnation and turn the AICC into a sterile body. As Acharya Narendra Dev pointed out: 'It has been nobody's case that the present system of election to the AICC has led to corruption in the Congress.'

We hope that the Working Committee which saw injustice in one proposed change, will see it in an even degree in this and will drop this amendment also. If, however, this is not done, it must evoke a battle royal in the open forum of the AICC. The amendment must be fought. There can be no compromise on it. We claim that political minorities have acted as a check against compromising capitulatory tendencies in the Congress.

99. R.P. Paranjapye¹ on Reforming Congress Minorities to be Represented or Excluded?

Leader, 25 June 1939.

25 June 1939

A committee has been appointed by the All-India Congress Committee to go into the measures required to clean up the abuses that have crept into the Congress organization and newspaper reports that it has tentatively arrived at certain conclusions which will soon be placed before the Working Committee and the All-India Congress Committee. It is not the business of the present writer to go into those which relate to internal organization, such as making registers of members, restricting the right to contest elections and so on. It is proposed to urge, however, that one of the recommendations that is likely to be made is against sound democratic principles and it is earnestly hoped that it will not be accepted in spite of some transient advantages that it may appear to offer.

Till now most of the elections in the Congress organization have been carried out on the principle of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. The famous report (named after the late Pandit Motilal Nehru) incorporated this principle as the best means of reducing communal tension. The present writer has advocated this method for over 25 years and his two representations made to Montagu worked out detailed schemes which Montagu accepted theoretically as the best, though for some practical reasons he could not introduce it in practice,

except in a few cases like the election of members of the Public Accounts Committees and election to the Council of State in Madras presidency. In some cases the less satisfactory method of the cumulative vote was laid down as in the case of the Council of State elections in Bombay. This latter method whereby an elector in a multi-membered constituency can give all his votes (equal to the number of members to be elected) to a single candidate or divide them as he likes amongst the candidates is quite common in local elections in the Bombay Presidency. Under the new Government of India Act Bombay alone has the distinction of possessing multi-membered constituencies with the cumulative vote, while other provinces have single-membered constituencies except possibly where a seat is reserved for the scheduled castes. The results of the elections to the provincial legislatures held in 1937 were ably analysed by J.H. Humphreys of the P.R. Society and his analysis, which was widely noticed in Indian papers, showed that in Bombay the election was much fairer than in other provinces and all shades of opinion could find a voice in the Assembly. In Bombay also leaders of various parties had no difficulty in getting elected with the help of the cumulative vote, while in other provinces many of these were defeated and so their advice was lost to the provinces.

The basic idea of democratic representation is to secure a small scale map of the whole body of electors. In a democracy majority must rule but minorities should be heard and their points of view must be considered and given all the weight that they deserve. The majority has not all the wit and wisdom of the organization only in its own risks. Reforms can come only gradually. New ideas spring up only in the minds of a few and they take time to recommend themselves, if at all, to the whole body. For this purpose every opportunity should be given for new ideas to find adequate expression. If some reformer finds that he is doomed for ever from propagating his views, he is likely to look out for non-constitutional means of propagating them. In the totalitarian states at present every expression of opinion which does not echo the prevailing views of the regime is sternly suppressed and we hear rumours of secret revolutionary movements which may prove dangerous to the safety of the state in an emergency. The temptation to suppress opposition views is perhaps intelligible but it must be consciously resisted by every true democrat. The love of power is such that one follows one kind of course before attaining it and quite the opposite for the purpose of attaining it and quite the opposite for the purpose of retaining it after it has once been attained. Under the Weimar Republic the Nazis first got a few seats under a system of proportional representation which they would not have got with single-membered constituencies or under the distributive system of voting, they gradually increased their power and after having once got the majority by hook or by crook their first action was to suppress all their opponents. The only alternative left to non-Nazis is to have secret societies working in an underhand manner to upset the Nazi regime and this is certainly not in the best interests of Germany.

Under the single-member system nobody can get elected unless he gets a majority of votes in one particular constituency. Forty-nine per cent of the electors will have no representation, while fifty-one per cent will have all. If ten thousand voters are uniformly distributed over ten constituencies and 4900 of them hold one set of views and 5100 another set, the former will get no representation while the latter will get all the ten seats. Will the minority remain for ever content with this enforced suppression? It is ordinary human nature that they will fret over this fate and may have recourse to underhand or unconstitutional means to have their wrong righted. If, on the other hand, they secure four seats while the majority get six they will recognize this as a moderately fair position and will have recourse to constitutional means to return themselves into a majority and the forum of the assembly will be one of the means that they will use for the purpose.

In the case of single-membered constituencies it may occasionally happen that in a few the minority party may have a majority. In the distributive system where there are multi-membered

constituencies but the electors can give one vote only to any candidate and have as many votes as there are members to be elected, even this possibility is very much reduced. The chance of the minority party being in a majority in one small area will be of no avail in that case. Its partial majority position will be nullified by the surplus votes in the other areas. The whole thicket of the majority party will get elected and the minority will be left completely in the cold. In fact the distributive system is peculiarly adapted for being used in the interests of a party caucus.

Jawaharlal Nehru has the reputation of being a thorough democrat. Will the committee of which he is the chairman do something so very anti-democratic as the replacement of a sound system by an unsound one? Of course for the time being the high command party led by Patel will be able to silence the followers of Bose. But will this add to the ultimate strength of the Congress? Is it not better that Bose should come out in the open before the AICC and by expounding his own views put his opponents on their defence? A repeated call to defend one's views has the merit of confirming them if they are right and altering them if they are wrong. Unless it is contended that one's own opinion is absolutely perfect and not capable of improvement in any circumstances, the reported recommendation of Jawaharlal should be rejected.

It is said that the single transferable vote or any other system of proportional representation is peculiarly liable to encourage the formation of small groups. But if one party is in the majority it will be able to deal easily with all the opposition groups. In any case it is better for a fairly large group to have its own representative in a deliberative assembly rather than influence others to make commitments and give pledges in order to get elected. A distinction has to be drawn between deliberative bodies and executive bodies. The former should represent all views held by any respectable portion of the electorate, while the latter should be as far as possible homogeneous. If, therefore, an outsider can venture to express an opinion on the recent controversy between Mahatma Gandhi and Bose on the constitution of the Working Committee, it appears that the former was on the whole right in insisting upon a homogenous Working Committee; but if he desires in the same way to get a homogenous AICC, he will be making a mistake. Even when there are several groups and no group is in a majority it will be possible to carry on the administration by some of the groups agreeing to carry out a certain definite programme and when it is carried out another combination may come about. One of the besetting sins of governments in power is to make every matter a question of prestige. Deliberative bodies will be much more useful if there are more occasions when free voting is allowed and official whips are withdrawn. The decisions arrived at will be far more in consonance with the real desires of the whole electorate.

It is usual for Indian politicians to refer to Irish precedents in discussing our own questions. On this question Irish experience is very valuable. When the Irish Free State was constituted, proportional representation was made an essential condition of the elections. During its whole history the elections have, therefore, been carried out in a spirit of harmony, De Valera has got his majority but his opponents have not been suppressed and have, therefore, no legitimate cause of complaint. In fact with true democratic spirit all parties are staunch advocates of proportional representation. In Northern Ireland on the other hand where party and religious feeling is intense, proportional representation has been recently abolished by the party in power and the Catholics are getting less than their due proportion of seats in the Northern Parliament and are, therefore, feeling increasingly bitter. Is it derived to bring in the same kind of bitterness in the Congress ranks? Will the Congress follow Northern Ireland or Eire?

The only argument against the introduction of proportional representation in elections to the legislatures that is worth consideration is that it requires literate voters to make it work smoothly. It would not be very difficult to devise means whereby illiterate voters can also vote according to that system; but in the case of Congress elections, practically all voters are literate and this objection

has no force. It is as easy to make a cross against one or more names as to put figures 1, 2, 3 ... after several names according to one's choice. The actual making up of results offers no difficulty to moderately educated people after a short instruction. It would thus be a most reactionary step to give up a fair and scientific system for one which is neither fair nor scientific but is based on greed of power and permeated with *ahimsa*. Will the apostle of *ahimsa* sanction the change?

¹ Raghunath Purushottam (Sir) Paranjapye (1876–1966); early schooling in Bombay and Poona; Senior Wrangler at St John's College, Cambridge; Principal of Ferguson College (1902–24); held ministerial positions (1921–32); vice-Chancellor of the universities of Lucknow (1932–38) and Poona (1956–59); India's High Commissioner in Australia (1944–47); Knighted in 1942.

100. The AICC

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 27 June 1939.

Dr Rajendra Prasad in the course of his speech opening the proceedings of the All India Congress Committee stated most if not all the major problems, domestic and foreign, that called for the decision of that body. The Committee, to judge from its proceedings, ignored almost all the problems stated by the Rastrapati. Most of its time was spent in considering certain changes proposed in the Congress constitution which were intended to 'purify' the organization. There is need of such purification, but the man in the street expects something more.

But for the decision to send Pandit Jawaharlal as 'ambassador' to Ceylon to try to persuade the Government of that country to be merciful to the Indians settled there, the AICC's output in the way of useful lead was practically nil.

Dr Rajendra Prasad's speech dealt with matters domestic and foreign: (a) the possibility of India's resources in men and money being exploited by Britain for a war in which she may be involved, and the action to be taken by the Congress in that connection; (b) the position of Indians overseas and the action the Congress should take to help them; (c) the policy of repression pursued by the Indian states and the assistance the Paramount Power is rendering to the States in furthering that policy, and the action the Congress should take in that connection.

As to the internal problems that faced the Congress Dr Rajendra Prasad mentioned the corruptions that have crept into the organization, and the dissensions and spirit of indiscipline in the Congress itself for which some of the eminent Congress leaders are responsible.

Certain other matters, domestic to the Congress, were considered by the Working Committee and not by the AICC. There were complaints made by some of the Ministries against the Provincial Congress Committees, and by the latter against the former. The Ministers complained that there was disposition on the part of the Provincial Congress Committees to dictate to them. The Working Committee decided that there should be no such dictation, but Ministers should keep themselves in touch with the Provincial Congress Committees to be acquainted with the views of Congressmen on important matters of policy and administration. A definite complaint was made by certain Congressmen of South India concerning promulgation of Section 144 CrPC by the Madras Government. The reference probably is to the anti-Hindi agitation. The Working Committee heard Mr Rajagopalachariar, was satisfied with his explanation, and decided that no action need be taken.

It does not appear from the proceedings, either of the Working Committee or of the AICC that any notice was taken of the almost constant complaint of the public in general and of Congressmen in particular that the Congress Ministries have not repealed the repressive laws. Not only that. Some of the Ministries have been freely resorting to these laws, including the Press

(Emergency Powers) Act. The Congress election pledge in that connection is being quietly ignored. It appears to us as surpassingly strange that no notice was taken of the recent conference of the Home Ministers called by the Home Member of the Government of India which was amended by almost all the Congress Ministers in charge of Law and Order, at which certain decisions were reached of a thoroughly anti-Congress spirit. The Working Committee did not take the trouble to consider this very serious matter, and nobody, thought fit to have it considered by the AICC.

The struggle of the 10,000 workers at Digboi which by common consent is not merely of local importance, secured scanty consideration. The Working Committee is reported to have decided that the Company should be asked to take the men on strike 'gradually,' though the Assam Premier informed the Committee that the Company was 'adamant' and was not in a mood to accept the demands of the strikers. The AICC did not take up the matter at all, and the Working Committee did not promise any assistance in men and money to the strikers to whose organization and discipline remarkable tribute has been paid even by unfriendly critics. The Company, unable to break the solidarity and spirit of the strikers has apparently decided to starve them to submission. But neither the AICC nor the Working Committee decided to issue an appeal for financial assistance to the men. They did not think either that the Congress should send a few thousand rupees to the men.

The 'purifying' resolutions of the Congress call for little comment. If the changes in the constitution can make men alter their nature none shall be happier than we. But we are disappointed at the resolutions on other subjects, which clearly indicate the ascendancy of a spirit of defeatism and suggest a lowering of the flag.

The AICC was not called upon to say how the country was to resist exploitation of the resources of India by British should the latter be involved in a war. Federation is dropped at least for the time being. The Congress President said in his speech that the Congress should not wait upon the pleasure of the British Government to renew the struggle for Swaraj in connection with the imposition of Federation, but should begin it. The AICC did not consider the suggestion at all. Dr Prasad said hard things about the Rulers of States and the Paramount Power, but hard words, as the saying goes, break no bones. The AICC did not say what the peoples of the States were to do either to defend their personal liberty or to obtain constitutional government for the States. Did it think that after Mahatmaji's request to the States peoples that they should lower their demands, the AICC had nothing to do? A somewhat militant resolution on the action to be taken by South African Indian passed by the AICC was recalled and whittled down to a 'butter and milk' protest.

Has the spirit of Chamberlain taken possession of the Congress? The old fighting spirit is gone or is all but gone. The Congress President regretted the dissensions and indiscipline in the Congress. Does it not strike him that the present policy and attitude of the present leadership of the Congress may have something to do with these developments?

III JULY-SEPTEMBER

101. Congressmen and Satyagraha

Independent India, Vol. 3, No. 27, 2 July 1939.

2 July 1939

The AICC resolution¹ banning satyagraha by Congressmen without 'the previous sanction of the PCC concerned' follows logically from the path that the Congress leadership is following and has decided to follow. The Congress leaders have definitely set their face in the direction of slow constitutional advance working on the perspective of a gradual transfer of power. In that scheme

mass action, struggles of the people are certainly out of place and it is but natural that the Congress leaders should seek to suppress them. What was being sought to be done all these days since the acceptance of offices in a perfunctory manner will be hereafter done in a systematic and coordinated manner. The AICC resolution debars Congressmen from organizing and leading the struggles of the masses. We are not particularly enamoured of the weapon of Satyagraha as understood in its Gandhian sense. It is a weapon which has been played out and which is utterly inadequate for the enforcement of the national demand for independence. But the Congress leaders have used the word in this resolution to designate all extra-constitutional forms of struggle. If the resolution is given effect to, the Congress will be progressively isolated from the masses and will cease to be what it is today. The resolution, as was put by a number of speakers in the course of the discussion in the AICC, will have the effect of killing the Congress in order to save the Ministries. Are Ministries more important than the Congress? That is the question which all Congressmen must answer and on that answer will depend their reaction to this resolution.

¹ Exception was taken to the following two resolutions of the AICC:
Satyagraha in Provinces.

This meeting of the AICC resolves that no Congressman may offer or organize any form of satyagraha in the administrative provinces of India without the previous sanction of the Provincial Congress Committee concerned.

Congress Ministries and the PCCs.

The Working Committee has repeatedly laid stress on the desirability of cooperation between the ministry, the Congress party and the PCC. Without such cooperation misunderstandings are likely to arise with the result that the influence of the Congress will suffer. In administrative matters the PCC should not interfere with the discretion of the ministry, but it is always open to the executive of the PCC to draw the attention of the Government privately to any particular abuse or difficulty. In matters of policy if there is a difference between the ministry and the PCC references should be made to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee. Public discussion in such matters should be avoided.

102. Congress Government Stand to Protect Culture, Religion and Tradition of Aborigines

Rajendra Prasad Papers, No. F.1-M/39, NAI.

Demand for separation of Chota Nagpur—a sectional and interested cry:

Congress Government stand to protect culture, religion and tradition of aborigines

Goodwill of Mahatma Gandhi—Greatest Friend for Aborigines

The demand for the separation of Chota Nagpur was an interested cry raised by one section of the people and was meant only to re-establish a reactionary form of Government which had been substituted at present by a popular form of Government, namely the Congress Government. The protagonists of this cry could not point out a single policy initiated by the present Congress Government in which the culture, religion or tradition of the aborigines had been disregarded. The greatest friend of the aborigines was the goodwill of Mahatma Gandhi, and the world opinion which was anxious to see that the down-trodden aborigines were raised from illiteracy and poverty. Thus declared the Hon'ble Mr Sri Krishna Sinha, Prime Minister of Bihar, in replying to the deputation of the Adibasi Sabha which waited upon him at Ranchi on the 5th July 1939.

Memorandum silent about Aboriginal Grievances

Replying to the memorandum of the Adibasi Sabha which was read out on their behalf by Mr Jaipal Singh, the Prime Minister said that it was unfair to him not to have sent him a copy of the memorandum in time. If the memorandum had been received beforehand he would have been able to deal with the points more comprehensively. Besides, he would have considered whether it

was any use receiving the deputation at all because contrary to his expectations the deputation did not seem prepared to discuss the grievances or the requirements of the aboriginals of Chota Nagpur but came only to press the case for separation and that too in a language bordering upon impertinence and in a manner which could not be characterized as friendly.

The Prime Minister pointed out that he was not prepared to attach much importance to the demand for the separation of Chota Nagpur. After all the demand came not from all the aboriginals of the province because the agitation had practically been confined to one district, namely Ranchi, and even among the aboriginals of Ranchi all sections were not at all anxious for separation. He had received a deputation from the non-Christian aboriginals urging upon him to protect their interests against the Christian aboriginals. But even if all the aboriginals had demanded separation it could not be called the unanimous voice of Chota Nagpur because there are other people also living in this area who constitute nearly 75 per cent of the population and who had, to say the least, expressed no opinion on the question even if they had not actually voiced their protest against the movement of separation. But whether Chota Nagpur remained a part of Bihar or went outside, there could be no doubt about the protection of the language, culture and religion of the aboriginals. He challenged Mr Jaipal Singh to point out a single policy initiated by the present Congress Government in which the culture, religion or tradition of aboriginals had been disregarded. On the other hand, the Prime Minister quoted the instance of the aboriginals of Hazaribagh and Ranchi being allowed to brew *Rachwai* for domestic consumption in order to show that however much the Congress government might be anxious to introduce prohibition it was careful to see that the feelings of the aboriginals were not sacrificed. The tenancy laws had been enacted with a clear idea of preserving the lands in the hands of the aboriginals. But, said the Prime Minister, Mr Jaipal Singh was entirely mistaken if he thought that in a Legislature for, say, Chota Nagpur, the aboriginals would have their way. If the present members in the Bihar Legislature who represented any constituency or interest of Chota Nagpur were to constitute a separate body, the aboriginals would inspite of their separate representation be in a minority. There was no reason to think that if, unfortunately, Chota Nagpur was separated the aboriginals would become a majority. Therefore, the question that the interests of the aboriginals in the Bihar Legislature were not sufficiently protected was not true. Their greatest friend was the goodwill of Mahatma Gandhi and the world opinion which is anxious to see that the down-trodden aboriginals were raised from illiteracy and poverty.

District Board Nominations

The Hon'ble the Prime Minister said that he would undoubtedly give most serious consideration to the claims of aboriginals in the matter of nomination to the District Board. But he wished that if this was the real purpose of the deputation waiting upon him it should not have been shrouded amidst so many other issues. He, however, pointed out to Mr Jaipal Singh that the principle which he was advocating in the matter of nomination was not at all sound. Mr Jaipal Singh thought that nominations must be made in the ratio of the success of the Adibasi Sabha candidates to the District Board. The Prime Minister pointed out that the nominations were to be made according to the principles laid down in the Local Self-Government Act which directed that such interests should be represented through the nomination as has not been represented through the election. But argued the Prime Minister that if a majority of the nominated members of the District Board were to be from the Adibasi Sabha because the Adibasi Sabha had a majority among the elected members in Ranchi, how could Mr Jaipal Singh support that Adibasis must have a majority of the nominated seats in the District Board of Singhbhum where the Adibasi Sabha had not been able to capture a majority of seats?

No Escape from Census figures

Mr Jaipal Singh had tried to challenge the census figures as quoted by the Prime Minister in his speech in the Legislative Council. The Prime Minister pointed out that there was no escape for him or for any public man or for any Government from the census statistics. The census figures had been prepared not by him or by his Government but by the old Government which was likely to be partial to the cause which Mr Jaipal Singh represented. But upon the present census he was certainly entitled to say that the aboriginals were no more than 25 per cent of the population of Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas taken together.

Chota Nagpur—A Deficit Area

As regards Chota Nagpur being a deficit area, the Prime Minister pointed out that his conclusions were based upon a through examination of the figures in the Secretariat. If Mr Jaipal Singh had just sent his memorandum to him in time the Prime Minister would have been able to place even the details before him. But the statement that Chota Nagpur was a deficit area to the extent of 28 lakhs of Rupees was unfounded.

Utmost Justice to Aboriginals in Appointments to Government Services

Mr Jaipal Singh had stressed that in spite of his repeated demands the Government had not given out the figures of aboriginals holding posts in Government Services. The Prime Minister was surprised at the statement. As a matter of fact this challenge had come to him for the first time. He was prepared to publish figures, but this he could only do after they had been collected in the Secretariat. Generally speaking he could affirm that in course of two years that the aboriginals are appointed; last year one aboriginal candidate was sent up for the Subordinate Executive Service by the Public Service Commission, and though he stood low in the list he was taken in without any hesitation from any quarter. This year the Public Service Commission did not send up the name of any aboriginal candidate, but he asked the Public Service Commission to send up as many names of aboriginal candidates as had appeared before that. The Public Service Commission replied that only one candidate had appeared and that the candidate was appointed. In view of these facts he hoped that the public would realize that the present Government had been trying to do utmost justice to the aboriginals.

Educational Facilities

As regards the establishment of a degree college at Ranchi the Prime Minister said that he did not see much reason for it, because there was already a College in Chota Nagpur situated at Hazaribagh under the control of a mission where Christian boys could get their education. He pointed out that the results of the opening of I.A. classes in Ranchi were not very hopeful. Out of 223 boys who had passed their I.A. since the establishment of I.A. classes at Ranchi in 1929, only 31 were aboriginals and 192 were non-aboriginals. The Prime Minister said that by the establishment of a degree college, the people who would benefit were not the aboriginals but the relatives of Mr Rakshit and Mr Krishna Ballabh Sahay. Government had at present sanctioned scholarships to meet the expenditure of every aboriginal boy who wanted to go up for higher education. But if the demand for a degree college came from all sections of the people in Chota Nagpur he would certainly give it his best consideration.

Irrigational Facilities

As regards irrigation, it was true that much had not been done. But it could also be asserted that the little that had been done for Chota Nagpur was more than what had been done for other parts

of Bihar. Government had already sanctioned rupees one lakh for each district of Chota Nagpur, and if more money was needed Government would not be reluctant to provide it.

Majority Opposed to Separation

In the end the Hon'ble Prime Minister pointed out that he did not like to reply to the general question of separation. He told Mr Jaipal Singh that his was an interested cry raised by one section of the people. He knew that there other people in Chota Nagpur who did not like separation. Besides, separation was not in the interest of Chota Nagpur itself. If the people as a whole wanted it, then neither he nor the Congress would have opposed the demand. But the present demand was only meant to re-establish a reactionary form of Government which had been substituted at pressure by a popular form of Government, namely, the Congress Government.

After the Prime Minister shook hands with the members of the deputation which consisted of Mr Akshit and another Muhammadan gentleman besides a few aboriginal leaders, the deputation departed.

103. Congress President's Declaration

Indian Annual Register, 1939, Vol. 2, p. 219.

6 July 1939

I have been much surprised to read in the papers Shri Subhas Chandra Bose's statement fixing the 9th July for protesting against resolutions passed by the All-India Congress committee at Bombay. It is well known that the resolution was passed after prolonged debate by a very large majority against the opposition of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose. If Committees subordinate to the All-India Congress Committee and office-bearers of such Committees or minorities within the Congress begin to defy such resolutions and organize and hold protest meetings against decisions arrived at after full deliberation by the All-India Congress Committee or the Congress, there will be an end to all discipline within the Congress and a complete disruption of the organization. I therefore desire to impress on all Congress Committees and their office-bearers that the policy and practice of the Congress, no less than loyalty to the Congress organization, require that they should carry out and give effect to the resolutions passed by the All-India Congress Committee, and participation in and organizing of protests and condemnation against such resolutions will be a breach of discipline. I trust the Congress Committees and their office-bearers will desist from organizing or participating in such protests and demonstrations.

104. Explanation Sent by Congressmen to the President, MPCC for Participating in Protest Day Meeting

MPCC Papers, Misc. Files Section, File No. 22A, 1939, NMML.

9 July 1939

From Abdur Roof Khan Mahri, Mahakoshal Provincial Congress member, Raipur, (CP) to the President, Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee, Jubbulpore, dated 3 August 1939.

Through the President, District Congress Committee, Raipur

Sir,

Your letter dated the 26th July 1939 was received by me on the 29th July 1939 through the Secretary, District Congress Committee, Raipur. In it you have asked me to explain why I had

taken part in the Protest day meeting of the 9th July 1939 and to show cause why disciplinary action should not be taken against me for disobeying the orders of the Congress President.

Is it not very strange that a member of the provincial Congress committee, who is entrusted by thousands of Congressmen only because of his past selfless services in the cause of liberation of the country from the grip of imperialism, should be so audacious as to disobey the orders of the Congress? Has he gone mad or does he want to injure the Congress cause and its prestige or has he become dead to the sufferings of the country and its people? My answer is an emphatic No. I am as alive to these things as any Congressman can claim to be. May I know what Congress is?

I think it is nothing more than a representative body of those who have become its members by paying four annas as its fees from the membership. Its representatives, who are the members of this body, are duty bound to struggle hard to redress their legitimate grievances. If any such resolutions are brought before the Congress as are harmful to the members, they should oppose them. If the representatives fail in their attempt, they have every right to go back to their constituents and to propagate their ideas there so as to create an atmosphere which would be favourable to them in the next election. It is no sin to fight for the principles. When the Congress decided to boycott the council and the assembly in the year 1924, the Swaraj party was formed. Persons like late Motilal Nehru, late C.R. Das and many other leaders—some of whom are now ministers and premiers—openly opposed the policy of the Congress in the press and on the platforms. Did the Congress take any disciplinary action against them? Perhaps it could not dare do so. Then again Mr Malviya and Mr Anney disobeyed the Congress in connection with the communal award. Was any action taken by the Congress against them? I took part in the protest day meeting as I sincerely believed that the resolutions passed in Bombay at the All India Congress Committee were harmful to the interest of the Kisans and labourers and against the principles of civil liberty. All I wish is to compel the Congress to withdraw these harmful resolutions. Disciplinary action should have been taken against us if we wished to make a separate body to end the Congress. The very idea however is hateful to us.

It would be a negation of the principles of democracy if disciplinary action is taken against every member who opposes such resolutions. If any organization acts in the interests of a few persons or dances to the tunes of others, it will surely end in a fiasco.

Today when I see that the rights of the Kisans and labourers and the civil liberty are trampled down under foot by the Congress Ministries, no remedy is left to me but to criticize openly the actions of the Congress. If we do not do so we would be traitors to their cause. I have as much respect for the President as any Congressmen has. I have personally no grudge against any leader of the Congress. I took part in the protest day meeting as I knew well that the order of the President was against the Constitution of the Congress as well as against the principles of democracy. Such orders are meant to suppress civil liberties. It would be sheer injustice if disciplinary action is taken against one who is ready to lay down his life for the cause of the most down-trodden humanity—the kisans and labourers in India.

Under the circumstances, I hope the weapon called 'disciplinary action' should not be so carelessly handed down by the Congress authority to its true and selfless workers.

(Abdur Roof Khan Mahri)
Mahakoshal Provincial
Congress Member
Raipur (CPs)

3 August 1939

105. 'Congress Going Through Crisis'

Article by S. Satyamurti, *Tribune*, 10 July 1939.

10 July 1939

The Congress is now going through a crisis caused by difference among one section of the Congress leaders who have the majority in the Congress, and as far as one can judge, in the country today, and another section which feels and says that this section has lost the revolutionary mentality and, therefore, cannot be trusted to lead the people in their struggle for independence and must, therefore, give way to the latter group. Of course, the normal method by which one leadership is substituted by another is for the minority for the time being to convert itself into a majority by propaganda work and by converting public opinion to its side. To the extent to which the present minority in the Congress seeks to achieve this avowed object by all legitimate and peaceful means they are entitled to do so, and the majority now in the Congress must agree to stand or fall by the amount, the extent and the nature of the support they get in the Congress and in the country.

From this point of view the proceedings of the All-India Congress Committee meeting at Bombay are illuminating. The Working Committee, or the right-wingers as they are sometimes called, were charged with the responsibility and the duty of amending the Congress constitution, so as to remove all sources of corruption within. To the extent to which amendments in the procedure can achieve this purpose, some amendments were put through. The most important is the provision that before a Congress member can exercise his vote, he should have been on the Congress register for at least a period of 12 months. This is a very necessary provision to which no reasonable objection can be taken. M.S. Aney who opposed this amendment stated that while the Congress collected the tax of four annas a year from members, it was unreasonable for the members to be deprived of their franchise. But he forgot, for example, that in elections to the legislatures in India a man or woman may be a tax-payer and yet not have the franchise, unless he or she has resided in the constituency for at least a period of 120 days in the previous year. Tax-paying by itself is not a qualification for election to the legislature in any constituency. Moreover, this period of 12 months is necessary in order to avoid last-minute enrolment of members by ambitious and unscrupulous people who want to utilize the Congress machinery for their own purpose, not often consistent with the general policy and ideas of the Indian National Congress as a whole. That that evil exists and on a large scale in some provinces, if not in all, is an undisputed fact, and admitted even by those who opposed the amendment. It is to be hoped, therefore, that this provision will be accepted and that it will go a long way towards eliminating corruption from that source in the Congress.

Another advantage of this provision will be that voters' registers for Congress elections can be prepared and published in good time and time may be given to Congress members to put in claims and objections and decisions obtained from competent judicial tribunals. After the disposal of all claims and objections, the Congress rolls can be revised and made available to the electors and the candidates in good time before the elections. This is very important to avoid personation and undue influence in elections.

Another provision in the same direction is that no member of the Congress can stand for election to any Congress office, unless he or she has been a member of the Congress for at least three consecutive years. That is perfectly consistent with any democracy. After all the Congress today has grown so much influence that people who did not touch the Congress even with a barge pole four or five years ago, are now anxious to become members of the Congress, and it is but right and proper that they should be admitted as members of the Congress. But, before they hope to hold responsible positions of the Congress to direct Congress policies and programmes, they

may well be expected to serve a period of probation for three years. In order, however, to soften the rigour of this provision the All-India Congress Committee has allowed Provincial Congress Committee power to exempt particular persons from the operation of this provision during the years 1939 and 1940. Therefore those who join the Congress this year have only to wait for one year after 1940 to become qualified for election to any Congress office.

An amendment was moved to this provision to provide that nobody should be a Congress Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, unless he has been a member of the Congress for three years. On objection being taken, it was ruled out of order by the President. Apart from the technical objection, it is also objectionable from another point of view. When the Congress takes office, it wants the best talent, character, and spirit of sacrifice available in the province for such offices. It is not possible always to exclude people who have not been on the Congress register for a period of three years, especially when we recognize the legitimate claims of minorities for such high offices.

These amendments must be taken along with another amendment which provides for the constitution of independent election tribunals in the provinces, composed of persons who do not stand for election to Congress offices themselves and who should be appointed by the Provincial Working Committee either unanimously or by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority. This is very important because there is a tendency in many provinces for the present majority in the Congress to perpetuate itself by various devices. In order to enable the minority to become a majority, if it has public opinion, specially Congress opinion behind it, elections ought to be conducted above board and election disputes ought not to be decided by tribunals appointed by the majority then in power. These tribunals must be independent and judicial. That is why this provision is made. If we can get good men and women to serve on these tribunals who are expected to do their duty without fear or favour, it will go a long way to purify and elevate the Congress elections to the high level at which they should stand.

But it is a matter of regret that the Working Committee did not give the All-India Congress Committee an opportunity of going further and deciding in favour of the ordinary distributive vote in elections to the All-India Congress Committee. After all, the Congress is not a political museum, nor is it even a parliamentary institution governing a free India. After all is said and done, it is the only secular, non-communal political fighting organization, fighting for the freedom of this country, and it has got resourceful and unscrupulous enemies to fight both inside and outside the country. Therefore, it is an axiom that for its existence and efficient functioning it should consist of men and women whose allegiance to the programme and policy of the Congress is undisputed. From this point of view, there is no case for proportional representation. There is a case for some provision being made for representation in the All-India Congress Committee of women, of labour or Harijans, and of minorities who cannot otherwise secure representation. That can be secured by reservation of seats for them when the election is by the ordinary distributive vote, by all delegates elected by the Provincial Congress Committee to the Congress Committee to the Congress. That change must be made, and the earlier the better.

Another change which I think is overdue is that no member of any elected Congress Committee should be a member of any other political organization. It may seem drastic at first sight, simply because we have allowed for the last three years the Congress Socialist Party to function as such. Looking at the question either from the a priori or from a practical point of view there can be no doubt that the Congress cannot allow its responsible members representing other Congress members to identify themselves with other political organizations. It is not done in any country. For example, in the Conservative Party in England while Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden and Duff Cooper are against the foreign policy of Neville Chamberlain and Lord Halifax and they sometimes speak

against that policy and sometimes abstain from voting in Parliament, they have not formed and they are not allowed to form any other political party inside or outside the Conservative Party. The fact that the British Labour Party has not yet come by its own is due to the fact that it is an ill-assorted conglomeration of Trade Unions on the one hand and of the independent Labour Party on the other. It is to be hoped that necessary reforms in this direction will be introduced as early as possible. A caution, however, must be expressed. There is no desire to put down differences of opinion or to prevent their expression and agitation with a view to convert the Congress to that view. But any political organization whose aim is not to increase the prestige or influence of the Congress, but to fight the Congress and its leadership and weaken it, ought not to be allowed to function in this country in the name of the Congress. The Congress is a perfectly democratic organization. It is open to its members to preach their own policies and programmes consistent with the first article of the Congress constitution. But beyond that, they ought not to be allowed to go.

106. AICC Resolutions and After

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 12 July 1939.

12 July 1939

It looks as if the Congress is fast heading towards a crisis. The requests made by the authorities that Congressmen should desist from making any public demonstration against the All-India Congress Committee's decisions did not meet with unanimous response. The Bengal Congress Executive condemned the AICC resolutions, and even in UP where Pandit Jawaharlal is the head of the Congress organization, meetings were held at Allahabad, Cawnpore, Lucknow and other important centres expressing strong disapproval of the AICC resolutions. Similar reports have been received from Nagpur, Jubbulpore and Bombay, and whether one approves or disapproves of the method in which the Left Consolidation Committee recorded their protest, it cannot be said that the resolutions passed by the All-India Congress Committee enjoy that amount of public sympathy and support everywhere, which alone can make them effective. The talk of disciplinary action is already in the air, and the General Secretary of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee is reported to have issued notice to nine prominent Congressmen of the city, charging them with indiscipline and insubordination and threatening them with disciplinary action. At Allahabad, Pandit Jawaharlal, while admitting that he was personally opposed to the AICC resolutions, strongly deprecated the holding of protest meetings as, in his opinion, such meetings 'would bring down the Congress in the eyes of the world or weaken the ranks by creating party differences.' He was, therefore, in favour of putting down such expressions of disaffection; he deprecated, however, at the same time 'the tendency to struggle for personal and group triumph in the Congress.' Whether it was the Right Wing or the Left Wing leaders that were struggling for group triumph inside the Congress, Pandit Jawaharlal did not tell us, but he was of opinion that 'our organization should not function [a]round individuals.' Pandit Jawaharlal surely has known as well as anybody else that Mahatma Gandhi is the central sun round which the Congress universe rotates, and he is certainly not unaware of the fact that the Working Committee of the Congress is but the echo of Mahatmaji's voice. What exactly he meant, therefore, when he protested against the Congress organization functioning round individuals will perhaps require further elucidation.

In Bengal, Dr Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, a member of the Working Committee, has issued a statement strongly deprecating the action of the Bengal Congress Executive who not only condemned the AICC resolutions, but called upon the public to join the protest meeting in their thousands. Dr Ghosh's attitude is understandable. He does not deny the right of individual

Congressmen to protest against particular resolutions of the Congress or of the AICC but he is of opinion that Congress committees or their office-bearers cannot join these protest meetings without being guilty of indiscipline and cutting at the root of the whole Congress organization. 'The AICC,' writes Dr Ghosh, 'is the highest authority of the Congress when it is not in session. Provincial and Subordinate Committees and their officers are to give effect to its resolutions.' We have no doubt Dr Ghosh's interpretation of the Congress constitution is correct; but the question may be asked whether the lower committees of the Congress are simply subordinate bodies whose main, if not only, function is to carry out the instructions of the Working Committee. Then the fact is to be noted that the higher organs of the Congress derive their authority from the lower organs and that the primary Congress committees which represent the will of the rank and file of the Congress are or should be the final repository of all power and authority. The All India Congress Committee has the moral right to act as the directing authority of the Congress only so long as it represents the wishes and opinions of the collective Congress membership as a whole. It is this representative character which gives the All India Congress Committee the right to enforce discipline on recalcitrant members. And this representative character must not be lost if the right of enforcing discipline in the name of the Congress organization is to be retained.

The question, therefore, that has to be decided before the AICC and the provincial, district and primary Congress organizations can be made to work harmoniously is not simply one of enforcing discipline from above, but of making the superior Congress organization truly representative of the opinions of the so-called subordinate bodies. As matters stand at present the lower Congress organizations are scarcely afforded an opportunity of expressing their opinion on any particular policy which the AICC may think fit to adopt.

While condemning the indiscipline of which so many Congress organizations have been guilty, it should also be remembered that it is something more than disciplinary action which is necessary if this rift in the late is to be permanently stopped. The rift, we are afraid, will go on widening so long as the Right Wing and the Left regard each other with mutual suspicion and distrust. The cause of that suspicion must be removed before there can be peace once again in the Congress ranks.

107. Report from H.E. Sir Maurice Hallett, KCBI, CIE,
Governor of Bihar to Linlithgow

Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2187, NAI.

13 July 1939

(Secret)

No. 860-G.B.

My Lord Dear Linlithgow,

I submit a further report and enclose the official reports for June. Before I deal with some points arising in these reports, I refer to one of the points raised in your reply of 3rd July for which I was as usual very grateful.

5. We also discussed the Adibasi movement or rather most of the discussion was between myself and the Prime Minister. He again contended that it was 'communal' and would lead to communal trouble and it is clear that he regards as communal any movement in opposition to Congress. He was inclined to contend that it was the Adibasis who were being aggressive; I urged that there were faults on both sides and that Government must be impartial. He was also somewhat hostile to the Missionaries contending they were supporting the movement—a point which I denied,

and that they were favoured in the matter of education grants and that only Christian aboriginals got appointments. I admitted that in the past government had helped the Christian Missions to establish schools, as they were the only organization working in these areas and I pointed out frankly that neither Hindus nor Muslims had done anything to help these people. Christian aboriginals got appointments because they were better qualified. The other Ministers, in particular Dr Mahmud, took a much more favourable view of the Mission. I hope therefore no attempt will be made to cut down the grants made to Mission schools, which are, as far as I know, given on the accepted principles; a mission gets a larger grant because it has more schools. The Prime Minister may take steps to give grants to Hindu organizations, and to help the non-Christian aboriginals; he overlooks the fact that non-Christians are admitted to Mission schools, or rather takes the view that they are readmitted so that they may be converted to Christianity. The Prime Minister I feel has a prejudice against Christians and I noticed the other day that in reply to a memorial by Jaipal Singh, the Adibasi leader, he was reported to have said that the movement was due to reactionaries influenced by British imperialism. He finds it difficult to get away from his preconceived ideas and 'slogans'. The situation will clearly need very careful watching for some time to come and I have written in some detail about it, so that it may be helpful to Stewart.

108. The Congress: Rabindranath Tagore's Letter to
Dr Amiya Chakravarti Translated by Surendranath Tagore
Modern Review, Vol. LXVI, July 1939, pp. 90-94.

I sit down to write to you in a perturbed state of mind.

There was a time, not so very long ago, when the mind of the great mass of our countrymen was desert-like; its unfertile expanse divided into isolated sections between which all commerce was obstructed, resulting, for India, in a succession of poverty-stricken epochs. All of a sudden came the rise into power of the new Congress organization, a wide-branching tree that held out large promise of future fruit. Surprising was the change it wrought in the mass mind, mind, as it learnt to hope, forgot to fear, and ceased to shrink from the very idea of casting off its bonds. What had seemed a while ago to be beyond the bounds of the possible was no longer felt to be unattainable. The feebleness of spirit that dreaded to desire was at length cured. And this stupendous change was due to the unbounded faith in India's destiny of one single man, a fact which already shows signs, here and there, of fading from public recollection.

Of course I know that, however, dependent the new Congress regime may be on the personality of its founder and great though that personality undoubtedly is, it will nevertheless be necessary from time to time to enlarge its scope and improve its working. But too much of a hurry to disturb the adaptation to its present circumstances which has grown with the growth of the Congress, may break up its very foundation. For it has to be admitted that no other genius seems to have arisen amongst us who is competent to bring about a radical change in it without damage to its organic, cohesion. That is why I think that this vast field of endeavour, where the different forces of the country may meet and join hands, needs must continue to be developed, for the present, under the guidance of the Mahatma who gave it birth.

As you know, I have never been a blind follower of tradition—that is to say, I have not believed that our national welfare could be made secure by fixing once for all some principle or method that was once found to be good, nor do I now feel it to be true that however great the Congress organization may have grown, its aims and objects should be stereotyped for all time—rather do I devoutly wish that such a calamity may not befall it. At the same time, whenever I

realize the immense value of this organization as created by a great-souled Master, I cannot but be perturbed at the possible consequences of piecemeal attacks on it from the outside. Such reforms as are found to be necessary must come from within itself.

Many of us still remember the original National Congress that started political agitation in India. It made no attempt to look into, to awaken, the mind of the people—its appealing glances were all directed to the authorities above. What it called freedom lay in the lap of dependence on others—this was the obsession it could not or would not get rid of. I need hardly remind you that I have never hesitated to cry shame on the poverty of spirit of the begging and praying Salvation Army into which that Congress had resolved itself.

We all know whose was the magic wand that touched into life the deadly torpor into which the country had fallen, making it conscious of its own powers, proclaiming non-violence to be the true creed of the brave. Of this new life which Mahatmaji gave to India, the stage of initiation is not yet passed, and further advance along its way should still be under the guidance of the Master. Like Nandi who stood guard at the entrance to Shiva's hermitage, I must raise my warning finger, for all that the Mahatma has to teach may not yet have reached us. When the rigour of Shiva's meditation was untimely broken, a raging conflagration was the only result.

So far for one side of the question. The other side also deserves anxious consideration. When the powers of the Congress had but begun to unfold, it had little to fear from within. Now it is at the height of its prestige; it has gained world-wide recognition; the doors of Government at which its predecessor of old had vainly knocked, are now hospitably open to it, even ready to show it honour. But Manu, the ancient law-giver, has warned us to beware of honour. For where power rises into eminence, toxins are created that eventually destroy it—be it Imperialism or Fascism, have they not been generating the seeds of their own downfall? It may likewise be that the heat created by the growing power of the Congress is rising to an unhealthy temperature. The higher command who are at its helm are apt, in moments of crisis, to lose their head, and cannot hold to a straight course. Have we not seen lapses in regard to the vital matters of mutual courtesy and forbearance, of constitutional procedure which had hitherto been sources of its strength—lapses at the bottom of which lies pride of power?

The Christian scriptures have warned us how difficult it is for bloated prosperity to pass through the narrow gate of the Kingdom of Heaven. Freedom can be won only by putting forth the best in men—that is what I understand the teaching of the Mahatma to be. But those who have come together to control the field of our high endeavour—are their minds proudly tolerant, unswayed by personal bias? When they create ruptures by wounding one another, is that for the sake of pure principle—is there no trace in it of the heat that is born of love of power, pride of power? The cult of Shakti that is gradually growing up within the Congress-fold shows itself in its true colours when Mahatmaji's followers find it in their hearts to proclaim him as the equal of Hitler and Mussolini. Can it be at all possible for those whose reverence goes out to these gatherers of victims for human sacrifice, properly to maintain the purity of the citadel of Truth built by the selfless ascetic whom they would follow? I have the highest respect for Jawaharlal, who is always ready to lead an assault against abuse of power by wealth, or blind faith, or imperialistic politics. Of him I ask whether the keepers of the Congress stronghold have not on occasions shown dangerous signs of the intoxication of personal power? I have my own doubts, but at the same time I do not hide from myself the fact that my knowledge of political happenings is very insufficient.

On this point it is necessary to say something further. Bengal seems to have made up its mind that at the last sitting of the Congress Committee the Bengali people were treated with contumely. To be too ready to believe such a charge is nothing but a sign of weakness. It is hardly a proof of political sanity to allow ourselves to be continually afflicted with the suspicion that every one

around us is conspiring against us. But the fact remains that in spite of the uniting center which the Congress represents, the provinces are showing lamentable signs of separatist tendencies.

The Hindu–Moslem disunity is both lamentable and alarming, because nothing is more difficult to bridge than the gulf created by religious differences. On the other hand the disunity between the provinces is owing to a lack of proper mutual understanding, due to differences of habits and customs. Thus Religion and Custom have between them usurped the throne of Reason, thereby destroying all clarity of mind. In countries where customs are not blindly sacrosanct, where religions beliefs have not cut up society into warring sections, political unity has come as a matter of course. Our Congress has not the advantage of being able to grow up in an atmosphere of social tolerance, rather it has to function in spite of social antagonisms which have set up impassable barriers every few miles apart—barriers which are guarded night and day by forces wearing the badge of religion.

Whatever the reason may be the fact remains that our provinces have not been welded together. I remember to have said somewhere that a coach of which the wheels are wobbly, the box-shaky, and the whole body creaky, is all very well so long as it remains propped up in its stable, there it may even be admired as a whole; but if it be dragged by horses through the street, it loudly complains of the lack of inward unity. That is what the Congress has done. It has dragged the provinces of India out on the highway of a common political freedom, and its internal discords are thereupon becoming apparent at every step. This being our plight, it behoves the authorities of the Congress to be very circumspect in their movements, for mutual suspiciousness is lying in wait to exaggerate the implications of every lapse, or inconsiderate gesture. That is what seems to have happened in the case of Bengal and the relations between it and the Congress high command have been strained to breaking point. Personally, I am not aware that anything has happened which made this inevitable. And yet, while the popular mind is thus exercised, it will be difficult for the leaders of Bengal to steer a correct course.

To me it is evident that Mahatmaji, having mapped out a particular line along which he advises the country to travel on its way to freedom, is naturally on the alert to see that no disturbing factor be allowed to bring about a deviation from it. Having successfully steered the ship of Congress so far, his reluctance to let it be taken out of its appointed course cannot reasonably be constructed as a desire to wield dictatorial power. Men of genius would be unable to fulfill their destiny unless they had unbounded confidence in themselves, a confidence which they are wont to fortify by their faith in divine inspiration. In spite of occasional serious mistakes, Mahatmaji may claim to have had sufficient proof in his successes of his being on the right track, and he is, moreover, entitled to believe that none but himself can worthily complete the picture of national welfare which he has conceived and outlined. It may well be that he has many a further touch in mind with which it is to be perfected in due course. If these finishing touches are not given under his direction, with the patient attention and reverence due to the master from his followers, the picture as a whole may suffer. In these circumstances, say I, we must rely for its completion on its creator, especially as it is still in the stage of unfinished growth.

Here I should confess that I do not always see eye to eye with Mahatmaji by which I mean that had I been endowed with the force of character; my scheme of work would have been different. What that scheme is, I have indicated in some of my previous writings. But though I may have the imagination to conceive, I have not the power to carry out. Only a few men in the world have this power. And since our country has had the good fortune of giving birth to such a man, the way should be kept clear for his progress—I certainly would never think of impeding it. The time will doubtless come when Mahatmaji's errors and omissions will have to be made good; then will each one of us according to his zeal and capacity, have the opportunity of making his contribution. For the present, let the Congress proceed to the destination towards which it is heading. I will not say,

like a blind follower, that there can be no other bourne beyond. Others there may be and are; but the time on other pilots will come when the first part of the journey is over.

I have referred to my own scheme. That was the outcome of my conviction that politics is but a part of the social system—as is borne out by the history of every country. To be enamored of some political system apart from its social foundation, will not do. Triumphal structures of different shapes and sizes raise their heads on the other side of the seas: we may be sure that none of them are built on foundations of sand. And when we set to work to imitate any superstructure that has caught our fancy, we should not forget the necessity of fitting it to some adequate foundation in the depths of our own social mentality.

I have recently taken refuge on a scheduled hill-top, far from the scene of the recent political excitement, and after a long time I am getting the opportunity to survey both India and my own attitude with dispassion. I can see clearly that politics has to do with two different sets of forces—one may be called mechanical, the other spiritual. In these days of crisis Europe is pacing backwards and forwards between the two. Neither is easy to secure, or work with; both have their price, the proper application of both requires long preparatory training. We who have been so long in subjection know what the impact of machanized force is like, but we cannot even dream of bringing it under our own control. The utmost we can think of is to purchase the alliance of some other power by getting into its debt. But history has shown us that to cultivate this kind of unequal friendship is like digging a channel to give entry to the crocodile, resulting in a feast for the latter at the expense of the digger.

There was a time when the issue of battle depended on personal bravery and physical strength. Now has come the day of weapons wrought by science which requires a high degree of intellectual skill for their proper use. Any fight with these is unthinkable for us, with our empty with our untrained body and mind. This was realized from the very beginning of our political life, wherefore our former leaders were content with launching their fleet of petition carrying paper-boats. But this reduced our politics to a mere game. Then arrived Mahatmaji with a solution for our utter lack of material equipment. Unflinching he came, with head high, to prove that battle could be effectively waged against wrong without mechanical resources. He started experimental campaigns along different lines, and though in none of them can it be asserted that he has won through, he was extracted from his very defeats lessons showing the way to ultimate victory. He has been busy ever since inculcating in the country the need of training in restraint and spiritual faith necessary to wield the weapons of non-violence.

It is comparatively easy to raise an army for violent warfare. A year's drilling is sufficient to fit men to be sent to the seat of war. But to train the spirit in the methods of non-violence takes more time. We have had enough of attempts to get together a rabble of untrained enthusiasts. Such crowds may be used to break down the work of rivals, but they cannot build up anything of value. They go to pieces when met by a determined counter-attack. Those nations of the world who are now in fighting trim, rely for their strength on the education of the masses of their people. The present age is the age of the trained mind, not of blustering muscle. And everywhere in the east, to say nothing of Japan, educational institutions have been made available for the people at large. So long as our masses remain bound to blind tradition it is hopeless for us to expect to make any move forward. And so, after his discovery that an undisciplined mob is not a fit instrument for non-violent work. Mahatmaji has cried a halt in his campaign of civil disobedience, and turned his attention to mass education. So far all is fairly clear.

But when I come to the contending political groups of the day, with their rival methods of political advancement, round which endless controversies are raging, I am beset with doubts, and cannot see the issue clearly. My main difficulty in arriving at any definite conclusion may be due

to my very meager knowledge of what is actually happening in the different political circles. I know that those who have the power can make possible the seemingly impossible. Mahatmaji is one of those who have this power, but it would be going too far to say that he is the only one or that all he undertakes must be successful. And if any other powerful personality inspired with a different ideal should arise, the latter, in turn, will not stay his hands because of the doubts or protests of others. It may even be that he will have to cut adrift from the main body and work alone to form another organization, of which it will take us time to appraise the proper value. Should such a personality come forth from within the Congress, I would watch his progress, and wish him success but from a distance. The responsibility would be so great, the effects so far-reaching, the consequences so incalculable, that their burden could only be shouldered by one who has the necessary degree of self-confidence. It would be beyond my capacity, altogether out of my sphere of work, to join hands with him in any way.

Our scriptures tell us that the worship of Ganesha, the Lord of the Masses, must come before all other worship. In the service of our country our first duty must be to work for the welfare of the mass of its people to make them healthy in body and mind, happy in spirit; to foster their self-respect, to bring beauty into their daily work, their daily life; to show them the way to strive together, in mutual respect, for mutual welfare. So far as my limitations have permitted, I have been doing this for the last forty years or so. And when Mahatmaji's call awakened the country, it was my fervent hope that he would rouse the powers of all sections of our people, in all their variety, to work in the different departments of national endeavour. For it is my belief that a realization of the country's welfare means to believe in it, to know it in its fullness. Its true freedom would consist in gaining the fullest scope for its now obstructed powers.

I can see that the leadership of Bengal has now fallen on Subhas Chandra. My knowledge of the all-India politics in which he tried to secure the first place, is admittedly insufficient. The party feelings are raging stormily, and I am unable to look into the future through the dust that has been raised. Buffeted by this turmoil my mind naturally clings to Bengal. I welcome the valiant Subhas as our leader in the hope that he will take on himself the burden of ridding Bengal of its weaknesses, external and internal, and in this work he may freely claim whatever help it may be in my power to give, in my own line of work. May his high endeavour raise Bengal to the height from which she will be able to take her due place in the counsels of all India.

109. Nehru on the Defiance of the AICC Resolution

SWJN, Vol. 10, pp. 583–85.

13 July 1939

I have expressed myself in my statement that the action of the left Consolidation Committee is partly based on a misconception of the AICC resolution. There is such a lot of talk of ban on direct action. The AICC resolution does not say any such thing. On the other hand, it gives power to the Provincial Congress Committee to choose their own course of action.

The Bengal Provincial Committee has lodged a protest against a resolution which gives power to it to decide its own course of action.¹ It is absurd to protest against the grant of such power.

I think a difference should be made between primary Congress members and office-bearers, because the latter are constitutionally bound to carry out the decisions of the AICC. Primary members have much greater latitude. And even executive members may have some latitude in regard to individual criticism, but it certainly does not include latitude to launch a mass attack on the AICC.

Such an open revolt must disrupt and weaken the Congress if it succeeds. It seems to me that many people who took part in the demonstrations on July 9 did not realize its implications. Many workers in the districts in my province asked me what the AICC resolution was. The resolution has to be explained to people very clearly. It is not clear how the same person in one capacity can carry out and in another capacity attack it. Matters have come to a head in this way. It seems to me that it is difficult to ignore this defiance of the Congress by the left members. But at the same time it appears to me that the question of taking disciplinary action against them might be premature at this stage. The first thing to do is to remove misapprehensions so that the issue may become clear. If a provincial Congress Committee can challenge and defy an AICC resolution, then a district committee or a city committee can equally defy the provincial committee's decisions.

The result in the end would be disruption, which no organization can tolerate. But it is not for me to lay down what should be done. Whatever the views I might possess on this subject that would be forestalling and perhaps embarrassing the Working Committee or the AICC.

To four members of the Allahabad district committee, who participated in the demonstrations on the 9th instant, I asked them, as president of the provincial Congress committee, to tender resignations of their posts, and carry on their agitation against the AICC in their capacity as primary members.

I totally disapprove of Subhas Bose's action in carrying on a campaign against the AICC while holding the presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. I would have had no grievance against Bose had he resigned the Bengal presidentship and then carried on his agitation.

My personal view is that the full provincial committee and not the executive alone must meet first and consider the resolution passed on the 9th instant by the executive committee under Mr Bose's lead. It should be remembered that the executive committee in Bengal had been nominated by the president. The full provincial committee might have views quite different from those of the executive and the president.

I do not agree with Bose that the Congress President's view of the requirements of discipline interfere with the basic principles and traditions of democracy. Democracy does not mean licence for one to do anything he likes. The Congress is a democratic body with a certain definite creed and objective. It cannot allow its members to carry on an agitation which injures the cause of the furtherance of its creed.

I must also regret Bose's criticism of the Bombay Government's prohibition programme. His statement on the eve of the launching of the programme seems to be undesirable and unhappy.

¹ On 9 July 1939, the Executive Council of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee passed a resolution deploring the two resolutions passed at the Bombay meeting of the AICC on 26 June 1939.

110. Gandhi's Statement to the Press

CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 429–41.

Abbottabad
13 July 1939

I have read Subhas Babu's statement on the Bombay prohibition with pain and sorrow. He had discussed the question with me when I was in Bombay. I had told him to confer with the Bombay Ministers. I do not know whether he did so. But I was unprepared for his public statement. He has used the arguments of the opponents of prohibition. He was President of the Congress last year, and having been duly elected for the second year he chose to resign owing to differences with his

colleagues. He is still head of the Bengal Congress Executive. He is identified with the prohibition policy of the Congress. His responsibility has not ceased because he is no longer in the Working Committee. Had he been a member, he could not have spoken as he has done. His statement because of his position is calculated to discredit the Bombay Ministry in a manner the avowed opponents of prohibition could never hope to do. I can only hope that in this matter Subhas Babu does not reflect the opinion of any other responsible Congressmen, and that the general public will continue to support the Bombay ministerial policy with as much enthusiasm as hitherto.

The Ministers' duty is plain. They have to pursue their programme undeterred by any opposition, if they have faith in it. Prohibition is the greatest moral reform in the Congress programme. Previous Governments too had given their lip assent to it, but having been irresponsible they had neither the courage nor the will to carry it out. They were not willing to forgo revenue which they could get without effort. They did not stay to examine its tainted source. The Congress Governments have the backing of public opinion. The Working Committee after very careful deliberation issued its mandate on prohibition. The ministers have all over taken it up to the best of their ability. The manner of execution was naturally left to the respective Ministries. The Bombay Ministers have been courageously pursuing their programme with every prospect of success. Theirs is a difficult position. They were bound to tackle Bombay some day or other. They would be faced with the same opposition as today from the interests directly affected by the prohibition policy. It is not open to any Congressman to embarrass the Ministers as Subhas Babu has done.

The communal question does not arise at all. Subhas Babu has rendered a great disservice to the Congress by raising the communal cry and the cry of minorities. Independence of India is impossible if causes great or small are to be discredited and ruined on the altar of the minority cry. Subhas Babu has played a most dangerous game by mixing up the communal question with such a purely moral reform as prohibition. It is as much the concern of a Muslim or a Parsi or a Christian as of a Hindu to look after his less fortunate countryman who happens to be a labourer and falls a victim to drink. The Bombay property-owners will pay one crore rupees as additional tax not because they are Parsis or Muslims but because they are property-owners. It is altogether misleading to suggest that the tax-payer, himself a non-drinker, will pay the tax for saving the drunkard. He will pay the tax for the education of his children whereas hitherto the drinker has been made by him to pay for that education. The additional tax will be tardy but very small reparation for the wrong done by moneyed men to the poor. And the poor have no class. They irrespective of their caste and creed make by themselves a down-trodden class. Their enforced creed is wretched poverty.

Parsis are philanthropists of the world. Why should they be behindhand in this greatest philanthropy? And if theirs is the greatest contribution, it is but in accordance with their best tradition. And they will be thrice blessed. Many of them will be weaned from a trade which corrupts the morals of their countrymen less fortunately placed than they. They will themselves be weaned from the drink habit. However mild it may be for them, I know, from having lived in intimate contact with them, that the drink does leave an indelible mark on them. Thirdly, moneyed men amongst them will have paid for the long-delayed reform. The cry of minorities is a calumny. It is a Parsi Minister to whose lot has fallen the privilege of introducing prohibition. Dr Gilder's is a job which brings him no money and it brings him drudgery and loss of a princely medical practice. Another equally disinterested physician is the Sheriff of Bombay. A third learned Parsi is Vice-Chancellor of the University, and a fourth businessman is the Mayor of Bombay. I do not know that there has been such a happy conjunction before in the history of Bombay. If the Congressmen and the Congress Ministry of Bombay were communally minded and were indifferent to the minorities, this unique event would not have taken place.

And I suggest that without the willing co-operation of the Muslim population of Bombay, the movement in Bombay could not have been introduced. I am quite sure that the best Muslim mind in all India is with the Congress in this Bombay project.

The piecemeal solution flung by Subhas Babu would not work. For one thing it would lack the psychological background. I therefore invite Subhas Babu to retrace his steps and join me in making an appeal to the great Parsi community, and those others who may oppose the reform to help it to become the success which it deserves to be. It is his duty as Rajen Babu's immediate predecessor to help the Bombay Ministry which is bravely pursuing the policy laid down for it by the Congress.¹

¹ Linlithgow informed Zetland on 14 July: 'In the Congress field, the most interesting development has, I think, been the increasing vigour of Subhas Bose's attack on the Right Wing culminating in his public attack on the prohibition policy of the Bombay Ministry, which has produced a vigorous come back from Munshi and others, in the course of which they point out that Subhas Bose during his period as Congress President must be regarded as having assumed a certain responsibility for the present Bombay policy. It is another indication of the widening of the gulf between the Left and the Right.'

111. Copies of Resolution Passed by MPCC and Reports of Anti-Congress Meetings

MPCC Papers, 1937-39, Misc. Files Section, File No. 22A, NMML.

Sl. No.1 File No. 1 Original File No. A-26II, Year 1939

Sub: Correspondence and Press clippings relating to the question, would a defiance of a resolution of the AICC amount to a breach of discipline? Copies of resolutions passed by MPCC and reports of anti-congress meetings.

Letter from Thakur Lakshman Singh Chowhan, President, Town Congress Committee, Jubbulpore to Thakur Chedlal, President, Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee, Jubbulpore, dated 17 July 1939.

Extract of the Letter.

To,

The President
Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee
Jubbulpore.

From,

Thakur Lakshman Singh Chowhan
302, Wright Town
Jubbulpore.

Reference: A 15/2561/197 dated 13 July 1939.

Subject: Disciplinary action.

Dear Sir,

1. It strikes to me as an irony of fate that the very Provincial Congress Committee should be called upon to take disciplinary action against those who are fighting for restoring the PCC's right to control the Ministries. But this by the way...

2. Immediately on receipt of the above notice I wrote to your office on 14.7.1939 to supply me with a copy of the Rashtrapati's order as I never received such an order nor did I know what it was. The office sent a copy of that order to me in Hindi, on the night of the 15th. It is enclosed herewith as appendix 'A'. It does not show as to whom it was addressed. It does not even bear the signature of the Rashtrapati, nor does it show that it is a true copy. From the contents it appears to be lifted from a news-paper. At any rate, as far as I know, this order was not communicated to the Jubbulpore Town Congress Committees nor to me personally by the MPCC. It may have been published in the newspapers but it escaped my notice. Even the question arises as to whether we should take newspaper reports as official reports from the High Command. In my opinion it would not be safe to do so, for we know that newspaper reports are often contradicted specially those in connection with the High personages. Even Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru have several times complained against the reporters and asked the people not to trust the newspaper reports.

3. But for what I did in the meeting of the 9th instant I do not want to take shelter behind my ignorance of the Rashtrapati's alleged order. I assert that I and for the matter of that all congressmen have always a right to appeal to the Congress High Command, against its decisions or orders, as is conceded to by the circular of the General Secretary, AICC, a copy of which is appended herewith as appendix 'B'. The meeting of the 9th was convened by prominent Congressmen of Jubbulpore including myself in their personal capacities to consider the two resolutions of the AICC resolutions. The resolution as proposed by me in that meeting appealed to the Congress to revise the two resolutions of the AICC passed at Bombay and in the meantime appealed to the Congress Working Committee to keep them in abeyance while they were reconsidered. The text of the resolution is the same as was proposed by the left consolidation committee. A copy of it is attached herewith for ready reference as 'appendix C'.

4. Now I have seen and carefully studied that alleged order of the Rashtrapati as sent to me by the provincial office. It gives direction to the Congress committees and its office bearers. It leaves the individual Congressmen free and the reason is obvious; otherwise it would amount to denial of ordinary civil liberties to Congressmen for which the National Congress and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru have fought so much.

5. I know, it is argued that the office bearers of the Congress committees stand on a different footing than the primary members of the Congress; that the office bearers cannot raise protest against the Higher authorities; and that they have no capacities apart from their office. But I may point out that the distinction between the official and private capacities has been recognized by the Congress organization in practice. Recently some Congress committee interdicted official reception to Babu Subhas Chandra Bose but gave liberty to all Congressmen to join the reception in their individual capacities. The argument does not take into consideration the fact that there is something like obedience under protest. Moreover, it imposes a premium on the office bearers as compared to primary members and is open to the objection that enforced silence of the Congress committee would invest it with the false impression of concurrence and willing acceptance of even an obviously wrong and unjust decision, which would be misleading to the nation at large. The strength of the Congress rests on the willing obedience contemplated just orders, which means that the orders should not only be just but should be understood and accepted to be just, otherwise the obedience will not be willing. Forced obedience is bound to lead to resentment and even revolt in extreme cases. The very fact that the Congress High Command has to resort to disciplinary action on a large scale in this case indicates that there is something wrong with the policy underlying these resolutions. Even Mahatma Gandhi wrote as far back as 1921 in his *Young*

India not to make a fetish even of the Congress and that by justifiable revolts only could we break false idols. Very recently he wrote in the *Harijan* not to make a fetish of the Congress resolutions. The High Command may with equal force be advised not to make a fetish of disciplinary action also.

6. Then again the alleged order of the Rashtrapati This has a bearing on the object and scope of the meeting of the 9th instant. Did that resolution (of 9th) denounce and defy the AICC resolutions? Certainly not. The resolution of the 9th made a reasoned appeal to the AICC and the speeches, at any rate my speech, amplified the reasons and the spirit of pure appeal running through the resolution. I admit that there is an element of protest also in the resolution; as there is always a protest involved in every appeal against a decision. If there is no dissatisfaction then there is no necessity and no ground of appeal. Therefore in my opinion to interdict a protest is to interdict an appeal which is against all canons of Law and Justice.

7. I think that the alleged order of the Rashtrapati is ultra vires if it prohibits Congress committees and the office bearers from seeking a revision of the AICC decisions by public appeal, for in my humble opinion even the Rashtrapati cannot take away the democratic right of the Congressmen in general to propagate their views and no disciplinary action can be taken against such Congressmen so long as they confirm to the object and the creed of the Congress.

8. I am at present the President of the Town Congress Committee, Jubbulpore and have been working in the Congress since 1919, gave up legal practice for 6 years, during the non-co-operation movement, and was incarcerated 2 times for civil disobedience and was fined also. By this I only mean to show that I am not a new Congressman. But still if I had known that the Rashtrapati denied me an ordinary civil liberty of speech and expression of true opinion which should be available to every son and daughter of the land and which is conceded to even a primary member of the Congress. I assure you that loving liberty more than office as I do I would have resigned the presidentship rather than suppressed the inner urge of protesting against the two resolutions of the AICC which I consider to be fundamentally wrong and detrimental to the development of the Congress as a fighting and revolutionary organization.

I only await the authoritative decision of the Congress High Command on the points raised above by me, to lay down, if ultimately it comes to that, my humble office as the President of the Town Congress Committee Jubbulpore not with a spirit of defiance and license but with that of love for justice, truth and liberty.

Yours truly
(Lakshman Singh Chowhan)

APPENDIX: B

Newspaper cutting

The *Hindustan Times*, 5 July 1939.

Sub: Questioning AICC decision
Secretary's warning
Hint to Subordinate Committees.

Allahabad, July 3.

The following circular has been sent to all Provincial Congress Committees from the AICC office over the signature of Acharya J.B. Kripalani, General Secretary, Congress:

'It has come to my notice that subordinate Congress committees have, in various places, passed resolutions calling in question the decision of the AICC. Several committees have organized meetings to condemn its decisions arrived at by the only democratic method by a majority vote.

'It must be realized that all Congress committees are under the jurisdiction of the AICC. They have to work under it and carry out its instructions. If subordinate organizations question the authority of the superior organization under which they have to work and whose instructions they have to carry out, there will be no discipline left in our organization. If we allow such indiscipline unchecked, we may despair of organizing the country for any effective action against our opponents.

'I, therefore, request all Provincial Congress Committees to warn Congress committees subordinate to them against all such undesirable activities. Where warning proves ineffective, action may be taken. It must however be understood that a request or suggestion can always be made to the AICC.'—(UP)

APPENDIX: C

Newspaper cutting

This meeting deeply deplores the two resolutions passed at the last meeting of the AICC in Bombay regarding satyagraha and the Congress Ministries.

The first resolution puts obstacles in the way of Congressmen participating in mass struggles. The Congress has grown to be what it now is, because in the past Congressmen in different parts of the country participated in the day to day struggle of the masses. The AICC instead of thwarting this activity should really encourage and strengthen it.

The second resolution deprives the Provincial Congress Committees of their right to exercise general supervision and control over the Provincial Ministries. It further bans public discussion of issues over which the provincial Congress committee and the Provincial Ministry may disagree. It consequently isolates Congress Ministries from the Congress organization and denies Congressmen their right to influence Ministerial policy.

In effect, these two resolutions subordinate the extra-parliamentary activities of the Congress to the exigencies of a purely constitutionalist policy. These resolutions, if not held in abeyance, will further accentuate the present drift towards constitutionalism and reformism and thereby destroy the revolutionary character of the Congress. It will divert the Congress from its immediate objective of preparing the country for a nation wide struggle against British imperialism.

This meeting, therefore, calls upon all Congressmen to mobilize themselves with a view to having these resolutions rescinded at an early date, and in the meantime, requests the working committee to hold them in abeyance.—(AP)

112. The AICC Resolution Protest in CP

'Protest Against AICC Resolutions', *Hitavada*, 14 July 1939.

14 July 1939

At Burhanpur: 11 July

The Burhanpur Forward Bloc celebrated the Protest Day for which a meeting was held at the Tilak Hall. Munshi Hari Krishna Mehra was in the Chair. The resolution protesting against the two AICC resolutions was moved by Vasant D. Puranik, General Secretary, Mill Mazdoor Sangh. Explaining the implications of the two AICC resolutions, he went on to say that the instrument of

Satyagraha was given to us by these very leaders who are now taking it away from us. It is obvious, he said, that today we are asked to cut the same branch on which we have stood all these years.

The resolution banning the supervision of the PCC over the Congress ministries was a negation of democracy of which the Congress so loudly boasts. He denounced the ministries, which he said, had not proved any better than the former ministries. Some supervision by PCC's was necessary.

Shrikrishna supported Puranik's viewpoint. He was sure he was not attacking the Congress. To him the Congress was a *'Murti'*. He was against the *'Pujaris'* and the method of *Puja*. To him the Congress was greater than the *Pujarie*. The High Command was showering signs of their Moderate character. Direct action must be and has always been the instrument of winning the lost liberty, and the AICC resolutions were strangling the ways to revolution.

D.K. Hakim, one of the organizers of the Forward Bloc, complained that public memory was short. He referred to Tripuri and to the changes suggested by Constitution Committee. He was confident that the two resolutions were to remove the obstacles from the path of the Congress ministries. The ban on Satyagraha was meant to check the Kisan and Mazdoor movement which the ministries have not been able to successfully meet. Another obstacle in the ministries' path was the Provincial Congress Committee. By these two resolutions the Congress ministries were assured of a stable position. He was of the opinion that if people got the idea that all this was a preliminary to the acceptance of Federation, they were not to blame.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

At Amraoti: 13 July

A meeting held under the presidentship of D.J. Paranjpe adopted a resolution condemning the AICC resolutions banning Satyagraha and placing the ministries out of the control of the Provincial Congress Committees. Paranjpe characterized the resolutions as anti-Congress in letter and spirit and said that they would result in circumscribing the national struggle.

Another resolution demanded that the Kisan prisoners should be treated as political prisoners and they should be released immediately.

At Saugar: 12 July

Under the auspices of the Left Consolidation Board a public meeting was held at the Municipal High School, Katra, to protest against the Satyagraha and the resolutions of the AICC passed in its Bombay sitting. Bhai Abdul Gani presided. Describing the two resolutions as restrictions on the civil liberties of the people, one speaker said that as a result of lust for power, consequent upon office acceptance, evils had crept into the Congress organization from the top which must immediately be checked and eradicated. The Right wing wanted to maintain its influence on the masses through the ministries and the organizations under it. The ministries had done practically no good to the people since the acceptance of office and should therefore renounce the office. The country was prepared for struggle for freedom but the Rightists were not.

Supporting a resolution, which was unanimously passed, Jwala Prasad Jyotishi said that the drift towards constitutionalism and reformism had replaced the revolutionary spirit thus slowing down the freedom struggle. The AICC resolutions militated against the basic principles of democracy.

At Raipur: 13 July

In pursuance of the appeal made by the Left Consolidation Committee for the observance of an All-India Day to protest against the two resolutions passed at the last meeting of the AICC in Bombay regarding 'Satyagraha and the Ministry', the Raipur Congress Socialist Party called a

public meeting to voice their protest against the said resolutions. In spite of rains and inclement weather, people gathered at the Gandhi Chowk, some of whom were served with a notice by the Secretary, District Congress Committee, threatening that if they took part in the protest meeting they would be liable for disciplinary action as they would be creating indiscipline in the Congress. Defying the orders of the secretary of the DCC meeting was held with Abdul Rauf in the chair. R.K. Chaube then read the resolution of the AICC and exhorted the public to take courage and protest vehemently against the said resolution to save the Congress from drifting towards constitutionalism.

He added that if this continued unhampered the Congress would surely lose its revolutionary character and thus would cease to be a revolutionary organization.

He was then followed by B.K. Sanyal, Subhagmal Lunia and Habib who made stirring speeches criticizing the resolutions and the circular issued by Rajendra Babu and deplored the objection raised by him to the constitutional and democratic right of every Congressman to protest against resolution that may hamper the onward march of the country and to mobilize public opinion for the removal of the same.

In this winding speech the Chairman of the meeting Rauf criticized the Congress ministry. He expressed the view that there was absolutely no difference between the former ministry and the present Congress ministries, for inspite of their high promises in their election manifestoes they had not been able to fulfil even a bit of it. On the contrary, they had resorted to firing and other coercive measures. In the end, he said that he, after his twenty years of faithful services, would not be sorry in the least if he were turned out of the Congress for participating in such protest meetings.

The resolution was then passed unanimously and the meeting came to an end by cries of 'Subhas Babu Zindabad'.

113. Irresponsible and Recalcitrant Minorities

Acharya Kripalani's Statement, *Tribune*, 15 July 1939.

14 July 1939

Acharya J.B. Kripalani, General Secretary, All India Congress Committee, issued the following statement on the 'Rights of Minorities':

If reason and not partisan spirit is to guide our public life, political questions must be dispassionately discussed in an atmosphere of calm and in the light of approved political theory and practice. Otherwise we are likely to loose ourselves in mutual recrimination which does good to nobody except our enemies.

Recently the question of the rights of the minority has been raised by the controversy that has raged in regard to the two resolutions passed at the last meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held at Bombay namely, on Civil Disobedience and the relation between ministries and the Provincial Congress Committees. The question is easy of solution if we continue our discussion to democratic theory and practice and do not cloud the issue by our passions and prejudices.

Democracy if it means anything means that right or wrong the will of the majority must prevail. But this would not be complete description of democracy if we failed to mention the undoubted right of the minority to ventilate its views and make converts. Both the majority right to rule and the minority right to criticize and propagate its ideas go to make up the democratic game. It would be politically wrong and democratically incorrect for the majority to stop criticism and public discussion.

Let us see if public discussion is sought to be put down by the statement of the President and his telegram to Subhas Babu on the present issue. What the president has interdicted is not public

criticism and condemnation of the resolutions but this on the part of Congress Committees and office-bearers of such Committees.

The Congress constitution provides for a hierarchy of Congress Committees in an ascending order. Over them all is the All-India Congress Committee. The lower Committees true, are democratically elected. But then the All-India Congress Committee is also democratically elected for a more comprehensive purpose and with a wider extended and an all inclusive franchise. While local Committees represent parts of India the All India Congress Committee represents the whole of India. The part can neither be greater than or equal to the whole. If India is not to fall in warring local units, as was the case after the fall of the Mughal empire, the more comprehensive and representative democracy must have power and command over the lesser local democracies. This is wisely provided for in the constitution. Any lower Committees including the Provincial Congress Committees may be dealt with for the disregard of the constitution and for refusal to carry out the decision of the All-India Congress Committees. The local Committees are no doubt autonomous bodies but only so far as local affairs are concerned. As far as the general policies and work for the whole of India go, the local units are the agents of the Central All-India organization democratically elected by the whole of the Indian nation including the States. If then a particular policy is decided upon for the whole of India by the All-India Congress Committee by the only democratically known device of counting heads instead of breaking them and by a majority vote, the constitution rightly requires that it should be given effect by the local subordinate committees. But if local subordinate committees instead of carrying out that policy organize meetings and demonstrations to condemn the policy, they are not exercising the right of the minorities but the right to revolt. Right to revolt here can mean only one thing, the ability to revolt. There is no constitutional or moral right to revolt because the decisions have been arrived at by the majority of the All-India organization.

If all this is conceded, it must also be conceded that the will of the Central organization that is, the will of the minority part in the Central organization can be carried out only through the office-bearers of the local organizations. If they have faithfully to carry out a policy they cannot at the same time criticize and denounce it in public. The right of the minority to criticize and denounce is not abrogated if the office-bearers of an organization are precluded from exercising such opposition. This elementary rule is understood and respected by all minorities in democratic countries. They keep themselves free to offer criticism and convert the majority to their view. When however, there is a National Government, that is, the Government of many parties, all parties that join to form the cabinet and accept office, deny themselves the privilege of criticizing official policies. But as soon as the difference between the parties become very acute the representatives of the minority party or parties retire from office and resume their undoubted right to criticize and convert. All over the world this practice is so well established that no individual would dare transgress this rule of convention of democracy. Any office-bearer whose views differ from majority would either resign or remain publicly mum for the time he chooses to hold office. Criticism of the majority policies and dissensions while holding office would not be considered the exercise of the right of minority, but a license. It would be rightly styled as sabotaging the policies of an organization from within. This game cannot be indulged in by democratic minorities but by minorities that do not want to play that democratic role.

If any party in the Congress stands for democracy as known and practiced the world over it must ask its members to lay down the responsibilities of executive office and then exercise the undoubted right of the minorities to criticize. They may not enjoy the privilege of office and the luxury and freedom of opposition. Even in a democracy you cannot have the cake and eat it too. Democracy implies alternate rule and subjection.

Therefore if the Leftist group want to exercise the privilege of the minorities, they must free themselves of the encumbrances of office; otherwise they must rightly be accused of using other than democratic methods. They who pride themselves on their intellectual gifts and are versed in international policies and are not the blind followers of any leader and those who, in season and out of season swear by democracy, must at least show this much grasp of democratic theory and practice. But it may be that they quite understand where right political reason resides and purposely raise the cry of the privileges of the minorities to cloud the straight issue? Such a procedure will not be democratic but demagogic. Every democratic minority must behave with responsibility, the responsibility of those who may one day be called to office and in that hour they still need all the discipline and organization necessary to carry into effect their principles and policies for the national good. Nothing is more inimical to democracy than irresponsible and recalcitrant minorities who refuse to accept with good grace the vote and the will of the majority as conclusive of the issue for the time being and carry their opposition in subordinate committees and executive offices.—United Front.

114. On the Muslim League

‘Night of Suspense’, *Medina*, Vol. 28, No. 52, 21 July 1939.

21 July 1939

[Extract]

For almost two years the Muslim League has been recounting the tales of oppression against Muslims. Muslims were repeatedly told that the only remedy for their complaints was to organize themselves under the banner of the Muslim League and keep away from the Congress just as a person bitten by a mad dog runs away from water. The Muslims followed this advice. The league flag was unfurled in every town, village and hamlet. Just as the Hindus respect Gandhiji, in the same way Mohammad Ali Jinnah was declared to be the *Amir al-Mumineen* (Head of the Muslims). Yet, the plight of the Muslims continues to be the same.

... The world is passing today through a phase of revolution, a period of action and struggle. But the true and pitiable reality is that, despite the all round call for active struggle, the Quaid-e Azam and Quaid-e Asghars (great and small leaders) have confined their politics to drawing-room gossip or to discussions inside clubs. The playfulness of these clever heroes of the Muslim League has reached a stage when the measure of patience of even the greatest of loyalists is almost exhausted... For instance, the *Asr-e-Jadeed* of Calcutta, at the end of its endurance, has written in a recent editorial: the very composition of the (Muslim League) Working Committee is such that no programme of definite direct action (civil disobedience) could be expected from it... Unless revolutionary elements in substantial numbers are included in the Working Committee, we cannot expect this Committee to take radical steps... We cannot understand how long this kind of negative politics will be useful to us. Complaints against the Congress and avoiding confrontation is a policy which cannot be followed for long...



115. On Defiance of the AICC Resolution

Sardul Singh¹ to the Members of the Congress Working Committee, 24 July 1939, File No. G-44, AICC Papers, NMML.

Chamberlain Road
Lahore

Dear Sirs,

I read in papers that there is a proposal to take disciplinary action against Shri Subhas Chandra Bose and others for participating in the protest meetings on the 9th instant, in connection with the two resolutions passed in the last session of the AICC. If the information is correct, I most respectfully submit that the action of the Working Committee would be not only impolitic but also unconstitutional and unjust.

The two resolutions referred to above directed Congressmen to adopt certain course of action under certain contingencies. One resolution asked Congressmen not to resort to Civil Disobedience without the permission of the Provincial Congress Committees concerned. The other resolution asked the Provincial Congress Committees not to interfere in the discretion of the ministries and not to indulge in public discussion in such matters.

The Working Committee may or may not be justified in taking any disciplinary action when such directions as contained in these two resolutions were contravened by any Congressman or any Congress Committee. As long as there is no defiance of these directions, the question of disciplinary action does not arise at all. Simply to protest against the passing of such resolutions by the AICC and asking the Working Committee to keep these resolutions in abeyance, can, under no circumstances, be regarded as defiance of these resolutions or challenge to the authority of the AICC.

When the party spirit is running high in the Congress, any action that the Working Committee takes should not only be just according to its own opinion but should be such as is regarded just and equitable by all the parties concerned. Congress, to succeed, must act not only justly with all those who come into contact with it, but should also convince those whom it punishes that they have been treated without any bias or prejudice.

Some sort of discipline is necessary for carrying out the policies of an organization like the Indian National Congress. But if discipline asserts itself at the expense of tolerance, the very object of the movement that has been initiated by Gandhiji for the attainment of Swaraj is bound to be frustrated. In the present case there are certainly two opinions about the justification of the proposed disciplinary action by the Working Committee. Even when the necessity of disciplinary action may appear to some to be wholly justified, it is quite clear that such action will lack in the opinion of many others the necessary qualification of being non-violent; it shall have all the appearance of vindictiveness.

I would therefore most earnestly beseech that the Working Committee should take no action in this case except giving expression to its own views in the matter and clarifying the position as liberally as it can for future guidance.

Yours most truly,

¹ Sardul Singh Caveesher (1886–1963); graduated from the Punjab University in 1903; launched the *Sikh Review* in 1913; President of the All-India Sikh League in 1921; actively associated with the Congress in Punjab; resigned from Congress on the issue of office acceptance and joined the Forward Bloc; its President in 1939.



116. On Convening a Constituent Assembly: Asaf Ali¹ to Rajendra Prasad, 25 July 1939

Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 3-D, 1939, NMML.

I really do not know whether I have any right to trespass on your time, but an idea or two which have occurred to me over and over again during the past 4 or 5 years and have recently taken a definite shape, are embodied in this note for your consideration. I am venturing to address this note to you and to Mahatmaji, Maulana Azad, B.C. Roy, Jawaharlalji, Sardar Patel and Bhulabhai Desai.

2. Two or three days ago I happened to look at the Congress manifesto which was issued at the time of the election to the Central Legislature. The central idea of the manifesto was to urge the substitution of the present constitution by one framed by a Constituent Assembly. I drafted a resolution regarding this subject during the very first session, but it had to be indefinitely postponed. Subsequent attempts by other members proved equally abortive for obvious reasons. I, however, feel that before we quit the Assembly, which may easily be next year, we must try to do something to redeem our manifesto, otherwise it will come home to roost.

3. The question of the Constituent Assembly under the prevailing circumstances has definitely receded into the background. But having regard to all the circumstances, perhaps we can venture on the first step to the ladder. In other words, it is possible for us to put forward the idea of a preliminary National Convention consisting of (1) the Ministers of Provincial Governments and leaders of opposition parties in the province, (2) the leaders of Parties in the Central Legislatures and twenty other representatives elected by a single transferable vote by both the Legislatures, (3) Ministers or representatives of such Indian States as have introduced some sort of representative Government, not exceeding one-third of the entire number of representatives from British India and (4) ten others to secure the representation of any other interests left unrepresented. The terms of reference should be confined to 'the settlement of the method and manner of convening the constituent Assembly for framing a Federal Constitution for India.' This, in a nutshell, is my idea. If the idea of this kind of nucleus of a national Round Table Conference is projected on the political screen, whatever the nature of the petty wrangles of the day, and the fragmentation of national life into smaller political groups, an opportunity will be provided for diverting the attention of different groups, communal or political, to some concrete and constructive constitutional problems which are bound to lead to the crystallization of definite course of action. I am not unaware of the dangers of such a course. But they are not different to the kind of dangers against which we were warned when the acceptance of office in the provinces was being controverted. We resolved to face them and some day we have to face these dangers also. I see no reason why that day should not be today. A non-official resolution can be tabled in the Central Legislature to urge the Government to give effect to this idea.

4. There is precedent for such action in the constitutional history of Ireland. A Constituent Assembly was summoned by a Royal Proclamation in 1921 or 1922 and the present constitution of the Irish Free State was the result. The whole trouble to my mind today is that in so far as the substitution of the present constitution is concerned nobody has as yet put forward any concrete alternative. We are in a state of what I call a political vacuum. We have rejected the existing constitution and then there is a blank. Some day, and that very soon, we shall have to join issue with the advocates of negation—by which I mean a violent revolution followed by, shall we say, Sovietization of India—and put before the country a positive goal through positive methods. Sheer suspension of political animation, in a larger sense of course, will begin to oppress and suffocate us before long. Today by distant references to direct action we are not advancing along

the road to our goal except by way of holding out hopes of experimental action. That to a mind like mine, and I believe I am not alone, is a very poor consolation against the postponement of positive achievement. The capturing of Legislatures was a positive achievement. The acceptance of office was a positive achievement. The ameliorative measures which are now being sponsored by our Ministries are positive achievements even when they are not all that they should be. Similarly on the larger constitutional canvass a positive picture of the constitution under which we desire the whole of India to work has to be clearly sketched for the benefit of those who are lingering in the twilight of vague hope and fears and positive confusion. It is true that by defining our position precisely and accurately in constitutional terms we shall be laying ourselves open to a good deal of criticism from every direction. But unless we sketch our picture with unskilled hands and in a haphazard manner all criticism levelled against it will amount to no more than froth and bubble. After all when the Nehru Committee put forward the sketch of a Swarajic constitution it laid itself open to a spate of criticism, and I admit that for the time being the Nehru Constitution had to be shelved. Are we not wiser by now and can we not come down from our heights and meet the exigencies of the existing situation by recognizing the objective realities of the day and proposing, if necessary, even a transitional constitution? Even constitutions, like human beings are not immortal. They change from time to time and die and give place to other according to the development and growth of human thought, human relations and the re-adjustment of the vast arena of changing interests. Even the Persians and Medes with their unchangeable laws were but only a bubble on the waters. The English constitution has undergone enormous changes during the last hundred years; and even now it is in the course of mutation. Why must we of all the people on earth be the first who think of immutable constitutions? The only point for our consideration which calls for an immediate effort on our part is the production of a workable constitution for today, which may automatically reach the uttermost confines of our conception of a fully Free India within the shortest space of time.

5. What I have suggested is only a tentative proposal which may be changed and chopped or rejected. But something along these lines has got to be done, if we are not to wait on changes and hazards. If nothing else I would suggest the creation of an *ad hoc* committee of the Congress (like the National Planning Committee) consisting of the Working Committee and a few others which should undertake the task of drafting a constitution for Swarajic India. If such an effort cannot be undertaken without first reaching the greatest common measure of agreement between the Congress and other political parties, the task of such a committee should be to find ways and means of convening an informal conference of the representatives or leaders of different political organizations for the purpose of exploring a common ground. But if none of these things can be done I very seriously doubt whether the policy of *laissez faire* in respect of the larger question can be of any great help to us in yoking the disruptive forces whose activities spell chaos and disaster, to a constructive effort.

6. I think I may permit myself to make another observation with every possible deference to the great work which the Working Committee has been doing. The monthly meeting of the Working Committee for three or four days or a week to dispose of routine work and a few urgent problems is undoubtedly a great advance upon the former practice of occasional meetings. But it is now time for a long enough period to attend, in addition to the day-to-day problems, to the larger problem to which I have made reference in the foregoing paragraph. Is it not also time for the Working Committee to devise a scheme to distribute well-defined portfolios to different members of the Working Committee so that different subjects may receive concentrated attention and the coordination of various subjects and efforts may be more easily achieved? Such a course was advocated by the late C.R. Das years ago and I had the temerity of resurrecting it in 1929 at the

Lahore Congress. But for some odd reason or other each time it was crowded out by other questions. Jawaharlalji has undoubtedly started some such schemes as far as the Secretariat of the AICC is concerned. But I venture to think that without a similar move from the top the success of the scheme must very necessarily remain very partial.

7. There are many other fairly important questions on which I would like to have an interchange of views. But what I have stated in the beginning of this letter constitutes the pivot of most of my ideas present, and until that question is satisfactorily disposed of, I find myself more or less in a state of suspended animation as regards other questions.

I trust this will find you in the best of health.

¹ Asaf Ali (1888–1953); educated at St Stephen's College, Delhi; called to the Bar in London, 1912; returned to India at the outbreak of War and joined the Home Rule League; participated in Khilafat activities and gave up his practice during Non-Co-operation movement; General Secretary, Indian National Congress 1927, and Working Committee member, 1930; member, Legislative Assembly, 1934–46; arrested in August 1942, and released in May 1945; Minister of Transport and Railways in interim Government, formed in August 1946.

117. On Bombay PCC: K.F. Nariman to Rajendra Prasad, 1 August 1939

AICC Papers, File No. P-7, 1939–40, NMML.

On 29th July 1939, a meeting of Congress Workers including some office-bearers of Ward Congress Committee was called to consider certain complaints and grievances with regard to certain obstructive attitude adopted by some officials of the BPCC. The meeting appointed a small Committee to submit a protest and to draft a representation to the President of the Congress on the subject.

In accordance with the said resolution, the following representation is submitted for your consideration and immediate action. It is hoped that you will take a just and dispassionate view and take immediate steps to remove the legitimate grievances and complaints of a section of Congressmen in the City. A copy of the said resolution is herewith annexed and marked A.

Article III of the Indian National Congress provides for the enrolment of primary members of the Congress. It applies to the whole of India and all Constitutions and Rules of subordinate Committees must make provision for enrolment for their respective areas consistent with the above Article III of the Congress Constitution.

According to the said Article III, there are four essential conditions that must be fulfilled before an individual can as a matter of right claim to be enrolled and registered as a primary member of the Congress.

These conditions are as follows:

- (a) That the applicant, male or female must be over the age of 18 years.
- (b) That he or she must believe in Article I of the Congress.
- (c) That he or she must make and sign a written declaration to that effect according to Form A(annexed). Under the new clause that signature must be attested by a witness.
- (d) That he or she must pay Annas Four as a membership fee.

As soon as an individual fulfills the above conditions, he automatically becomes a primary member and is entitled to be placed on the Register of Congress members kept at any duly authorized office.

In addition to the above essential requisites, there are subsidiary provisions or sub-clauses such as no person can be a primary member of more than one Committee.

Sub-clause (b) the application shall be handed over personally or sent by Post or messenger.

Sub-clause (c) provides for full name, description and place to be stated in the application.

On all the above formalities being observed, the applicant is entitled to have his or her name enrolled and receive a certificate of membership as per Form B. (vide Sub-clause D).

The Bombay Provincial Congress Committee at its urgent meeting on 12th June 1939 passed certain rules regulating the enrolment of members.

Rule (i) of the said rules is as follows:

‘Any person residing or carrying on business in the City of Bombay, who wishes to enroll himself as a member of the Indian National Congress under Article III of the constitution of the Congress, shall present an application as required under the provisions of the said article at the duly authorized office maintained by a District Congress Committee under Article II-I(a) of the Constitution of the BPCC, or at the office of the BPCC, or at any center for enrolment of members opened by the BPCC.’

Thus the above rule is strictly in accordance with Article III of the Constitution. A copy of the said Rules is herewith annexed and marked B.

Rule 16 of the said Rules gives authority to the General Secretaries to issue instructions to carry out the intentions of the foregoing rules.

Under the authority of the said rule (16), the General Secretary issued instructions to the Wards etc., on 14-6-1939. A copy of the said instructions is herewith annexed and marked C.

Instructions 4 and 5 are as follows:

‘4. The Forms to be given at one time ought not to exceed 20, that is, one book. Until this book is returned, another book should not be issued.’

‘5. The forms shall not be issued to any one except the duly authorized enrolment officer. The duly authorized enrolment officers will be as follows:

- (a) Members of the BPCC.
- (b) Members of the Executive Committees of the DCC.
- (c) Members of the various Committees of the BPCC.
- (d) Any other Congressmen authorized in writing by the General Secretaries of the BPCC.’

It is submitted that these directions are ultra-vires in as much as they go beyond the authority given to the General Secretaries only to issue instructions for carrying out the intentions of the Rules already framed.

These directions of restricting enrolment only through certain specified officers and particularly item (d) giving full discretion to General Secretaries to accept or reject any individual according to their arbitrary will, as enrolling officers, is in effect nullifying the main provisions of Article III of the All India Constitution, which gives full facility for enrolment without any such restriction. In previous years, membership books were freely given to any Congressman or even to a citizen, who was prepared to deposit membership fees in advance and who expressed a willingness to get members enrolled. By these instructions and rules, all the powers and control that were formerly in the hands of the ward Committee for enrolment is now transferred to one or two individuals.

This arbitrary authority and wide and uncontrolled powers in the hands of individuals are greatly abused and there have been numerous complaints in Bombay, where the General Secretary has without assigning any cause rejected number of applications for enrolment officers, because these applications were signed by members of the opposition group and they intended to enroll members on behalf of the Leftist Party, whereas same power was wrongly used to give all facilities to applicants desiring to enroll members for the majority Party to which the Secretaries belonged. Herewith are sent the names of some applicants, all from leftists, whose applications were rejected

for no apparent reason. Besides, when the opposite group started organizing with a view to carry on a systematic enrolment campaign and with that object was preparing to select a number of enrolling officers from different Wards, the General Secretary suddenly issued a notification that no more enrolling officers will be appointed from 6 P.M. on 22nd July 1939, thus effectively paralyzing all enrolment activities, though the AICC had appointed 15th September as the last date for enrolment. This sudden discontinuance of enrolment officers is also without any authority, because neither the local Rules nor the Constitution make any provision for the same.

When a protest was sent and the right challenged, the General Secretary claimed inherent right to act in this arbitrary and high-handed manner. Though the DPCC had met a few days before, still the matter was not even placed before the meeting.

Besides the above, the General Secretaries subjected all applicants, who brought application forms signed by members of the opposition group to most humiliating and insulting treatment; they were subjected to a lengthy and elaborate examination and CIDs engaged out of the press staff of Mr Patil and paid for by the BPCC, were set after them and sent to their houses and families as if they were culprits and guilty of serious offences that needed elaborate investigations. They were harassed by being asked to attend Congress House for days together and made to wait for hours, and even after all that humiliation and harassment, applications of many were rejected and several others left in disgust and resentment without waiting for the certificates.

On the other hand, all courtesy was shown and facilities afforded to all applicants, who had promised to work for their own party and they were attended to and given certificates and number of enrolment books immediately. If an independent inquiry is made, convincing proofs can be adduced to prove the above statements, showing most partial and discriminating attitude of the above officials.

Several complaints were made in the Press and a few instances are herewith annexed and marked D.

Not a single instance can be traced when similar treatment was meted out to any applicant of their group or who was refused a certificate of enrolment.

For all these years in the past, the enrolment was done by Ward Committees, but this year alone, due to the growth of opposition and Leftist Party, the control is taken by the BPCC officials with a view to check Leftist expansion.

A copy of correspondence with the Secretaries on the subject with a covering letter was already sent to the President and General Secretary of the AICC, but so far there is no reply from either.

Hence, as there is no possibility of getting any redress by appealing to local authorities, we have in accordance with the resolution passed at the meeting of Congress Workers on the 29th instant submitted this representation to you; the matter is very urgent, because the last date of enrolment is September 15th and in order to enable the General Elections in the city to be held and conducted properly and legally, according to the Congress Constitution, it is quite essential that campaign for enrolment of primary members for all parties should be allowed to go on unhampered and unobstructed, with sufficient safeguards and supervision only to prevent corruption and introduction of bogus membership. But under the false bogey of preventing corruption, the party in power should not be permitted to abuse its authority and misuse the Congress machinery at its disposal to crush the opposition by all means fair or foul and thus maintain their present majority and *status quo*.

We are in a position to prove convincingly that these obstructions and difficulties are deliberately and designedly created to attain the above objective. It is extremely unfair to the opposition and not playing the game sportingly to take such mean advantage over the opponents and try all questionable methods and means to suppress them, when it is apprehended that if a fair contest is

allowed and free verdict of voters is permitted to prevail, the position of the party in power may be shaken. Because last year, both parties were almost equal and an outside vote to be imported to maintain their strength, so this year, they are taking these precautions in advance to stifle the efforts of the opponents from the start; because if enrolment of primary members could be successfully obstructed and hampered, success at the subsequent elections could be definitely secured. It was to avoid such unfair treatment and secure equality and justice to all parties, that Mr Nariman had suggested an amendment that the entire election arrangement including the enrolment of primary members should be entrusted to independent and impartial agency, not belonging to any party. That is the only way to secure justice and inspire confidence; otherwise, the party in power would always be naturally tempted to abuse its authority to maintain *status quo*.

We hope, therefore, that you will direct immediate and urgent steps to prevent this oppressive injustice and discriminating treatment by allowing enrolment campaign to go on unhampered, strictly in accordance with the liberal provisions of the Constitutional right of public for enrolment. Unless this primary right is enforced, the election based on incomplete and illegally obstructed enrolment is bound to be challenged, causing confusion and delay.

Whatever political difference or party conflicts, in a mass organization, like the National Congress, based on moral foundations it is hoped and expected that there will at least be fair, equitable and just treatment to all and the ultimate deciding factor would be a free and unhampered verdict of the Ballot Box. On that basis, our Workers are instructed to carry on enrolment campaign in the City in accordance with the Article III of the Constitution and obeying only such local rules or instructions that are consistent with those mandatory All-India provisions in the hope that you too will issue instructions to all concerned to act strictly in accordance with that Constitution so as to prevent complications for the future.

With pranams and hoping to receive urgent and impartial attention to the above.

Yours sincerely,

Annexure A

Copy of Resolution

(a) This meeting of Congress Workers of all Wards in the City enters its emphatic protests against the obstructive and high-handed attitude of the General Secretaries of the BPCC with a view to hamper enrolment of primary Congress members.

(b) This meeting is definitely of opinion that the present officials of the BPCC are abusing their authority and misusing their power to maintain '*status quo*' at all costs.

(c) This meeting is further of opinion that some of the enrolment rules and instructions issued by the General Secretaries of the BPCC to secure the above object are ultra vires and illegal in as much as they are inconsistent with Article III of the All India Constitution that provides for enrolment of Primary Members throughout the country.

(d) This meeting therefore calls upon all the Congress Workers in different Wards to carry on the Enrolment campaign undeterred by the obstruction and difficulties, strictly in accordance with the liberal provisions of the Constitution and send the applications duly filled in according to Article III, also by post or with messenger as provided for under Clause (b) of Article III of the Constitution.

(e) This meeting hereby appoints a small Committee to send a protest and make proper representation on the subject to the Congress President and also to take all steps and measures to enforce the constitutional rights of enrolment, as provided by the Congress Constitution.

Rules Regarding Enrolment of Members

(As amended by the BPCC at its urgent Meeting held on 12th June 1939)

1. Any person residing or carrying on business in the City of Bombay who wishes to enroll himself as a member of the Indian National Congress under Article III of the Constitution of the Congress, shall present an application as required under the provisions of the said article at the duly authorized office maintained by a District Congress Committee under Article III (a) of the Constitution of the BPCC or at the office of the BPCC, or at any center for enrolment of members opened by the BPCC.

2. On the presentation of the application, the applicant shall supply to the enrolling officer such particulars, regarding age, occupation and residential or occupational address as required by the said officer and pay the annual fees of four annas.

3. The applicant on being enrolled, shall receive a card bearing a serial number, the applicant's name, father's name or husband's name in case of married woman, his address, his signature or thumb impression taken in the presence of the enrolling officer and duly attested by him.

4. Every applicant shall preserve the card given to him under the foregoing rule and shall produce the same at every election if he wishes to exercise his vote.

5. No member shall be allowed to vote at any election unless he produces the card issued to him under the foregoing Rule 3.

6. If a member loses his card, he may apply in writing to the General Secretaries of the BPCC for a duplicate card not less than 15 days before the date of election of delegates and if the General Secretaries are satisfied that the card is lost, they shall issue a duplicate to the member concerned. The duplicate card shall contain all particulars as the original one and bear the true signature or thumb impression of the member concerned.

7. No form or forms of application for Congress Membership shall be issued by any duly authorized center for enrolment except after paying in cash deposit money which shall be at the rate of four annas per form issued.

8. There shall be only one duly authorized office for every District Congress Committee

9. Every District Congress Committee shall maintain a register of enrolment in which names of applicants for membership shall be entered in the order in which their applications are presented at the duly authorized office. The said register shall be kept up-to-date and shall be open to inspection at any time by any officer appointed in that behalf by the President or the General Secretaries of the BPCC.

10. Any irregularity in the maintenance of the said register noticed by the Inspecting Officer shall be forthwith reported to the General Secretaries of the BPCC, who shall have power to take such action as is required under the circumstances disclosed in the Inspecting Officer's report to carry out the intents and purposes of these Rules.

11. For the purposes of Article III-I of the Constitution of the BPCC the President of the BPCC shall authorize centers for enrolment of members to be opened at such places in the several Districts of the City as he deem fit, in addition to the duly authorized office of the District Congress Committee.

12. On the President authorizing the opening of a center under the foregoing rule No. 11, the General Secretaries shall provide the necessary equipment and shall appoint the necessary enrolling officers.

Sind Provincial Congress Committee

Statement of Membership upto 30th September 1939 with necessary details

<i>Name of the District</i>	<i>Population (1931 Census)</i>	<i>Total No. of members enrolled</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Harijans</i>
1. Karachi	5,88,976	5837	5231	606	537	490	164
2. Hyderabad	6,62,924	3166	1442	1724	341	275	19
3. Larkana	4,48,637	2098	640	1458	94	77	—
4. Sukkur	6,23,758	2321	1243	1078	89	80	2
5. Nawabshah	4,96,612	1419	295	1124	133	76	—
6. Tharparkar	4,68,040	1658	476	1182	88	9	31
7. Upper Sind	2,59,709	902	504	398	110	5	—
8. Dadu	3,38,394	778	174	604	51	9	7
9. Khairpur Mirs State	2,27,183	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	41,14,233	18,179	10,005	8,174	1,443	1,021	223

Sind Provincial Congress Committee

118. Reflecting on the Future of Muslims: Zabibur Rahman to M.N. Roy

Letter to the Editor, *Independent India*, 6 August 1939. The correspondent wrote from Jehanabad in Bihar.

Knowing your political views, I am inspired with the confidence that you will not fail to pardon me for the liberty of addressing you this communication. For some time, I have been trying to understand what can be the right sort of politics for the Muslims in India. I am not capable of solving the problem with the thoroughness which it requires, and have decided to seek your advice. I wish you would give a lead to the Muslim community by dealing comprehensively with the problems that face it.

Next to the depressed classes, it is the most poverty-stricken community in India. Emancipation of India from foreign economic exploitation and political domination and destruction of capitalism and landlordism are in no way less in the interest of the Muslim community than of any other. It is all the more to its advantage as the freedom of India from British yoke will bring some relief to other Islamic countries. The creed of non-violence does not appeal to the Muslim community; therefore, given a correct lead, it will fight Imperialism and join any revolutionary movement with all force, vehemence and earnestness.

I suppose, what (Muslims) want, is that [they] must have a full and unrestricted right of self-determination in matters social, political, economic, religious and linguistic. [The Community] wants to exist as a nation within a nation, being not prepared at this stage of Indian politics to merge its identity into the nation which the present day Congress wants to bring into being. It wants that provinces with [a] Muslim majority should form completely autonomous States, whose powers will not be crippled by the Central Government. In the minority provinces it should have thorough and effective safeguards and full rights of citizenship unrestricted by customs and practices, so that it could have the fullest opportunity of developing its culture and language. Being in a

minority in so many provinces, it cannot grudge according the same rights to other communities in provinces where it is in majority.

The misfortune of the Muslim community is that the leadership of its premier organization, that is, the Muslim League, is in the hands of the people whose interests and political views can hardly approve of any revolutionary programme. Therefore, instead of leading it in the right direction, they are deliberately misleading it. They are making it so very bigoted that in a very short time it will be incapable of making any joint effort with other communities for the freedom of India.

On the other hand, the Congress, not being very keen about the attainment of complete independence, also does not make serious efforts for winning the confidence of the Muslim community. It does not try to appreciate the natural misgivings of a minority and backward community. The practical policy of Congress Ministries still leaves much to be desired.

You can be trusted for formulating some such thoroughly liberal policy and work with such an all-embracing programme as may win the confidence of the Muslims and induce them to join your Radical League and shake off their present leadership.

119. 'The Present Political Crisis and the Duty of Muslims'

Home (Political), File No. 37/30, 1939, NAI.

[Bengali pamphlet entitled 'Bartaman Rajnitik Sankat O Mussalmaner Kartabya' by Mohammad Ehsanul Haq Affendi, a resident of Rangpur district. Published at the Kali Krishna Machine Press in Rangpur, the pamphlet was forfeited by K.N. Blandy, Secretary to the Government of Bombay, on 7 August 1939 under Sections 124A and 153A of the Indian Penal Code.]

It is said, Congress belongs to the Hindus; Congress has pulled down many mosques and tombs and converted them into temples! Congress has put a stop to the saying of prayers by Muslims, their calls to prayer, slaughter, and the reading of the Koran. Congress has won over a large number of Muslims by means of bribery, etc.!! I request every one of my anti-Congress friends to produce evidence in support of the aforesaid charges! Will they kindly submit before the community a list of their evidence? If Congress does really belong to the Hindus and if it has really kicked at the interests of Muslims had not the Muslim community been put on their guard against this bluffing of the Congress before 1937? And why, again, in 1933–34, did Jinnah himself vote with the Congress Party and defeat Government again and again in the Central Legislature? Why again in 1935, was Fazlul Huq, himself a tiger of Bengal, very lavish in praise of Congress? Why has Maulana Akram Khan¹ passed the whole of his life in the fold of the Congress?

What is the matter? What has happened? A thing which was good two years ago has today suddenly become bad in this way—What does this mean? Can I then say that some of the provinces having come one after another under the administration of Congress this sort of entirely false propaganda has been started against it by a number of people who are self-seeking, opportunist, who have all through their lives taken shelter under the wings of Government and are treacherous to the country? With the exception of 2 or 3 provinces, Congress administration is going on in all the remaining places (8 provinces), that is, administrative authority is passing continuously into the hands of those against whom police lathis had so long been used and whose bodies chained all over had so long been thrown into dark prison cells. At most places, Congress governments are today abolishing the use of wine and hemp by means of legislation. As a result, lakhs of rupees of the people in the country and their character are being saved. By employing thousands of educated unemployed young men to spread the light of education among the illiterate peasants and workers of villages, they are trying, on the one hand, to diffuse the light of knowledge and, on the other, to

remove unemployment from the country. They are sanctioning through Government large sums of money by way of pecuniary assistance for the promotion of all sorts of industries in the land. Reducing the salaries of highly placed officers, they are doing much work of public welfare with the money thus saved. They have accepted that ideal themselves before all others. Without accepting like the League Ministers of Bengal monthly salaries of rupees three thousand or two thousand and a half, they are doing their work with only rupees five hundred. Very often they make use of bullock-carts instead of motor cars in going from place to place. With their eyes upon the interests of the countless peasants and workers in the country they are amending the Tenancy Act. They are now very often appointing in the higher posts the black-skinned people of this country instead of the white skinned people of England.

The progress of Congress has always been as an eyesore to the British Government, and quite naturally so. For, the British want to exploit this country while the Congress wants to save it from such exploitation ... Then, again, no other nation or country in the world of men has so seriously injured Islam as has been done by Europe generally and more particularly by the British Government. Europe has snatched away properties of Muslims to the extent of seventy-two lakhs thirty-four thousand and six hundred and thirty square miles from Africa and Asia alone. And if the properties occupied by Muslims in Europe are taken along with it, even then too, the total of all those Islamic territories comes up to more than at least ninety lakhs of square miles, from which the influence and authority of Islam have been completely removed, regular Christian influence being perpetuated. Hence, as a Muslim, I consider it the greatest duty of my life to engage in all constitutional struggles to emancipate this country from the clutches of British Imperialism which is thus severely oppressive and has plundered everything belonging to Islam—an object for which Congress alone has been carrying on a heroic struggle for a long time past. Congress was established in 1885. From that time up till now, whenever Congress has raised its head a little, there has been no lack of unceasing attempts by means of various false preachings and propaganda on the part of the favourites of the British Government against it with a view to its suppression. In 1888, a good deal of opposition was got up against it through the Late Sir Syed Ahmad of Aligarh.² Entirely at the instance of Government, he too, by organizing the Muhammadan Educational Congress, United Patriotic Association and Oriental Defence Association, carried on strong propaganda against Congress on the one hand and the old Islamic civilization and the *Ulama* of the country, on the other, just as in the present days Jinnah and some of his blind supporters have set themselves to that task. Be that as it may, even then too (that is, in that year 1888), faced with such a political crisis, the Muslims, describing the real nature of the Congress, had asked from the *ulama* of those days for a *fatwa* as to whether it was proper for the Muslims to join Congress and to carry on a struggle for India's freedom unitedly with Hindus and other non-Muslims. In reply to that, in that very year of 1888, hundreds of *ulama* and perfect saints such as Hazrat Shah Rashid Ahmed Gangohi,³ a bright sample of 'the family of gracious saints', and *Shaikhul Hind* Hazrat Maulana Mahmudul Hasan⁴ (preceptor of Hazrat Maulana Madani and Maulana Thanvi),⁵ by publishing a book named *Nusrat al-Abrar* had proclaimed its propriety. And not only did they proclaim its propriety but they also carried on all through their life non-violent Satyagraha against British Imperialism. Today also, the universally respected teacher of the Muslim world, Shaikul Hind Allama Madani, Mufti-I Hind Kifayatullah, Sobhanul Hind Allama Ahmad Saeed, Hazrat Maulana Habibur Rahman, the tiger of the Punjab, Mufti-e-Azam Maulana Mohammad Nayim Ludhianvi, Fakhr-I Bihar Hazrat Maulana Mohammad Sajjad, Maulana Shah Ataullah Shah Bokhari, Maulana Abdul Kalam Muhiuddin Azad, Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi⁶ and many other saints and *ulama*, world famous fighters for religion are repeatedly proclaiming its propriety and have themselves been connected with it for a long time past.

Those who are going about preaching that Congress or Hindus are the only cause of the ruin of Muslims, I would like to ask them with all respect:

- (1) Who, in this country, has snatched away the standard of Islam from the hands of Muslims?
- (2) Who, in 1849, violating the pledge given to Muslims, substituted Persian with English as the Court language and thereby engaged in the base conspiracy of putting an end to religious education and the influence of *ulama* among the Muslims?
- (3) Who for one long century kept the Muslims suppressed and thus raised the Hindus above them? The substance of the letter which was written by Lord Ellenborough,⁷ one of the former Governor General of India, to the Duke of Wellington⁸ in 1843, is as follows: 'As regards Muslims, my firm conviction is that they are fundamentally our enemies, hence it should always be the policy of our Government to keep them from making any advance and to repress them through the Hindus by always placating the latter'.
- (4) Who, today, in holy Palestine, Waziristan and Yagethan, is murdering Muslims catching hold of them and wiping out bustee after bustee by releasing poisonous gas? Who is today dyeing the holy courtyard of Jerusalem red with the blood of human beings?
- (5) Who, before this, destroyed thousands of Muslim families in the free Islamic kingdoms such as Turkey, Egypt, Malta, Mesopotamia, Tunis, Morocco, Bulgaria, Armenia, Montenegro, etc., and unfurled the flag of Christianity over those heaps of ruin?
- (6) Owing to whose oppression is the sovereignty of Afghanistan and Iraq now in serious danger?
- (7) Who has kept up riots and disturbances between Hindus and Muslims in this country? Who follows divide-and-rule as a policy of administration?
- (8) Who prepared the Macaulay⁹ scheme in order to deprive Muslims of this country of their religious-minded-ness?...

Muslims, say, say truly who they are. Are they the 22 crores of Hindus or Congress or British Government itself, and even a verbal protest against the wrong or injustice committed by whom you fear that you will lose your faith, while a faithful Muslim finds in it the brightness of the light of faith. In Hadis,¹⁰ it has been stated, 'It is the highest kind of martyrdom to tell Government to their face in clear language about the oppression committed by them'. It has been further stated, 'To witness with one's own eyes injustice and oppression and still to sit silent is the greatest sign of hypocrisy'.

It is Congress, the biggest national organization of India, which has been desperately fighting for the long period of the last 53 years against this all-devouring British Imperialism, and on account of this Congress has had to undergo various sorts of sufferings, miseries and humiliation such as imprisonment, execution, transportation, etc. It is solely as a result of the countrywide tremendous agitation made by it and of the laying down of their lives by thousands of workers during the movement that the extremely autocratic and bureaucratic administration of the British is slowly coming to an end everywhere in the country and democratic administration after which Congress has made persistent endeavours all through its life, which is the goal of the struggle and which, moreover, reflects faithfully the ideal of our Islam, is being introduced. This has made it possible for us all to cherish hopes to the fullest extent about the glorious future of our country.

The dreams of those who are seeing visions of the Muslim League or of Islamic ministry in Bengal are entirely without any substance. Even if the Huq-Nalini Ministry of Bengal can be described as Muslim League Ministry, how, then, can the Muslim League be a purely Muslim association? Do not forget that even among those with whom the Bengal Ministry has been constituted, there are five big Hindu zamindars. Hence, every Muslim should consider calmly as

to whether those who are going about preaching antagonism to the Congress which is now gaining political and administrative rights day after day before the simple-minded, rural Muslims in order to achieve their own interests are real friends of Muslims or not so at all.

It is also being said that in Congress provinces severe high-handedness is being practiced upon Muslims. If high-handedness with regard to Muslims means the passing of power into the hands of Congress, were there no riots and disturbances between Hindus and Muslims, nor any bloodshed when power had not passed into the hands of Congress? If there have been—and there is no doubt that there have been—on what grounds, then, is blame now being laid a new upon Congress for this? I have already said that it is the divide-and-rule policy of the British Government which has kept alive dissensions and quarrels between Hindus and Muslims ...

Sir John Maynard¹¹ has stated: 'It is during British rule that quarrels and dissensions between Hindus and Moslems began and had not these quarrels and dissensions been brought about them, our rule would not have been lasting.'

It is being given out that I have taken Congress money and thus become an adherent of it. I have gone over to the Hindus. As regards the first, it will suffice if I say this much—let those who are preaching this today be ready in all ways to prove it before the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) tomorrow on the day of judgment, the day on which neither Mr Jinnah nor the Raja of Mahmudabad¹² will be of any avail, the day on which there will be no means of denying anything, the day, moreover, on which our hands, feet, eyes, ears, noses and mouth will testify to the acts done by us. I have gone over to the Congress—I have certainly done so—only for this very reason that it is Congress alone which has all along carried on a struggle to the best of its capacity against the all-devouring British Imperialism for the full independence of this country and at the present time also it alone is engaged in a heroic struggle over the interests of the destitute peasants, cultivators, workers and labourers in the country. I believe that it is on the full freedom of this country that the remedy of all sorts of sufferings and miseries of the people of the country, the welfare of the Muslim world and the progress of the religion of Islam depend.

As regards the second point, my submission is that I have never gone over to the Hindus. I know quite well that Congress is not a political organization monopolized by Hindus. On the other hand, we too have our legitimate share and rights there. For, we, too, are Indians and Congress is fighting to secure political rights for the India. Hence we shall enter Congress, will surely enter Congress so that when freedom is attained (and it will surely be attained) tomorrow, the Hindus, who are our compatriots, may not say to us that we have no title to this right of occupancy of theirs. From the day on which Congress was born (1885 AD) up to now, lakhs of Muslims have taken part in it. Even today also, the number of the Muslim members of the Congress of the whole of India exceeds several lakhs. Even the greatest independent Islamic associations of India (such as Jamiyat al-ulama of Delhi, Majlis-i Ahrar of the Punjab, Khudai Khidmatgar of the Frontier Province, Imarat i-Sharia Phulwari Sharif of Patna, Krishak Praja Samiti of Bengal) have been up till now in sincere sympathy with the Congress.

If because of my having entered the Congress, I have gone over to the Hindus, I do not know seated in what firmament those who have not yet entered the Congress are carrying on conversations with the angels? Are they not speaking with Hindus? Are they not having their fill of sweetmeat purchased from the shops? Are they not getting residential quarters and mosques for prayers built by them? Are they not doing their work, sitting together with them in District Boards, Local Boards, in the Council and the Assembly? If they are doing so—and it is sure that they are doing so, do they also like ourselves become devoid of religion or Hindus?

If, in order to perpetuate British Imperialism, it is not improper to form a Muslim Coalition Ministry with Hindus and Sikhs, why should it be improper to cooperate with either the Hindus

or with the Congress, the center of unity of all communities in order to acquire full freedom for the country by destroying it? As a matter of fact, what is being preached does not represent the truth. The only cause of the grudge against Congress is that the Congress is fighting over the interests of the masses, and in this fight it has been successful to the extent of 10 annas in the rupees. Today the right of administering the country has been continuously passing into the hands of the Congress. Hence, just as, on the one hand, there has been an earthquake in the British palace, similarly, on the other, some selected selfish people have been adversely affected. Hence, having no other alternative, they have begun to infuriate the simple-minded Muslims in rural areas against the Congress by raising the cry of Islam in danger. I hope that Muslims will thoroughly scrutinize everything and then decide their duty and will never bring about their own ruin under the influence of any temporary excitement. Amen!

¹ Maulana Mohammad Akram Khan was drawn into the Swadeshi movement in Bengal; a leading journalist and editor and proprietor of the weekly and monthly *Mohammadi*; connected with the Krishak Praja Party before joining the Muslim League in 1936; President of the Bengal Muslim League from 1941 to 1947.

² Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–98); the Aligarh reformer and founder of the MAO College; author of numerous seminal works, including the *Asar-us-Sanadid*, published in 1847, *Asbab-i-Baghawat-i Hind* (The Causes of the Indian Revolt) and the *Loyal Mahammedans of India*; published and edited the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* and the *Tahzib al-Akhlaaq*; in politics Syed Ahmad was a champion of Anglo-Muslim rapprochement and a fiery critic of the Indian National Congress.

³ Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1829–1905); took an active part in the 1857 revolt; co-founder of the Dar al-ulum at Deoband and succeeded Maulana Mohammad Qasim Nanautawi (1833–77) as *mohtasim* in 1880; an *alim* of considerable distinction; favoured co-operation with the Congress but critical of the activities of Syed Ahmad Khan.

⁴ Mahmud Hasan (1851–1920); graduated from Deoband in 1873 and joined the staff there; principal of the Dar al-ulum, 1890; launched an anti-British campaign in favour of Turkey, 1911; moved to the Hejaz with his associates to avoid arrest, 1915; arrested by the British in 1916, and was interned at Malta, 1917–20; returned to India in June 1920 and joined the Khilafat movement.

⁵ Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (1863–1943); one of the leading scholar-theologians of Deoband and was among the few Deobandi Ulama who supported the demand for Partition.

⁶ Syed Sulaiman Nadvi (1884–1953); educated at Phulwari Sharif, Madrasa Imdadiyya, Darbhanga, and Nadwat al-ulama, Lucknow; edited *Al-Nadwa*, 1912; one of the founders of *Dar al-Musannifin*, Azamgarh, 1914; member, Khilafat delegation to Europe, 1920, and of delegation to the Hejaz 1924–25.

⁷ Edward Law Ellenborough (1790–1871); Governor General of India during 1842–44.

⁸ Duke of Wellington [Arthur Wellesley], (1769–1852); conqueror of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo and later Prime Minister of Great Britain (1828–30).

⁹ Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859); English historian and politician; entered the House of Commons in 1830; came to India in 1834; returned to England in 1838 and served as Secretary for war (1839–41).

¹⁰ Or *Hadith*, the record of the Traditions of the Prophet Mohammad, which is regarded as a major source of religious law and moral guidance.

¹¹ Herbert John Maynard (1865–1943); joined ICS in 1883; member of the executive council to the Punjab Governor (1921–26).

¹² Amir Ahmad Khan, the Raja of Mahmudabad (1914–75); a taluqdar with vast landed estates in Awadh; drawn into the Muslim League politics in the mid-1930s and held a key position in the organization as President of the All India Muslim Students' Federation, as Honorary Treasurer of the Muslim League and as its member to the Central Legislative Assembly (1946). He was, however, close to a number of Congress leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru, and was often uncomfortable in the company of Muslim Leaguers. The following extract from M.A.H. Ispahani's letter to Jinnah on 17 December 1942 is illustrative of changing political mood: 'I went to Mahmudabad and spent a day with Amir. I got him alone in snatches of a few minutes at a time, for he is most of the day surrounded by a host of fellows, and had a heart to heart talk. I feel I have succeeded in impressing upon him that his sudden withdrawal from political activity and change over to a full time concentration on religion within the four walls of the Mahmudabad Qila, was far from desirable and was likely to be misunderstood by all and sundry. *Inshallah*, he will get out of his new run soon. I am pressing him to come down to Calcutta and to organize the Students Federation in Bengal. He has promised to do so and I shall keep at him until he leaves the UP and particularly his home town.'



120. Subhas Chandra Bose to Congress President

Indian Annual Register, 1939, Vol. 2, pp. 219–20.

7 August 1939

I am exceedingly sorry for the delay in replying to your letter of the 18th July, from Ranchi.¹ You have asked me for an explanation of my action in protesting against certain resolutions of the All India Congress Committee passed at Bombay.

In the first place, one has to distinguish between protesting against a certain resolution and actually defying it or violating it. What has so far happened is that I have only protested against two resolutions of the AICC.

It is my constitutional right to give expression to my opinion regarding any resolution passed by the AICC. You will perhaps admit that it is customary with a large number of Congressmen to express their views on resolutions passed by the AICC when a particular session of that body comes to a close. If you grant Congressmen the right to express their views on resolutions passed by the AICC, you cannot draw a line and say that only favourable opinions will be allowed expression and unfavourable opinions will be banned. If we have the constitutional right to express our views then it does not matter if those views are favourable or unfavourable. Your letter seems to suggest that only expression of unfavourable views is to be banned.

We have so long been fighting the British Government among other things for our civil liberty. Civil liberty, I take it, includes freedom of speech. According to your point of view we are not to claim freedom of speech when we do not see eye to eye with the majority in the AICC, or in the Congress. It would be a strange situation if we are to have the right of freedom of speech as against the British Government but not as against the Congress or any body subordinate to it. If we are denied the right to adversely criticize resolutions of the AICC which in our view are harmful to the country's cause then it would amount to denial of a democratic right. May I ask you in all seriousness if democratic rights are to be exercised only outside the Congress but not inside it?

I hope you will agree that when a resolution is once passed by the AICC, it is open to us to have it reviewed or amended or altered or rescinded at a subsequent meeting of that body. I hope you will also agree that it is open to us to appeal against the AICC to the higher court of appeal, namely the open session of the Congress. You will agree further, I hope, that it is open to a minority to carry on a propaganda with a view to converting the majority to its point of view. Now how can we do this except by appealing to Congressmen through public meetings and through writings in the Press? The Congress today is not an organization of a handful of men. Its membership has, I believe, reached the neighbourhood of 45 lakhs. We can hope to appeal to the rank and file of the Congress and to convert them to our point of view only if we are allowed to write in the Press and also to hold meetings. If you maintain that once a resolution is passed in the AICC it is sacrosanct and must hold good forever, then you may have some justification for banning criticism of it. But if you grant us the right to review or amend or alter or rescind a particular resolution of the AICC either through that body or through the open session of the Congress, then I do not see how you can gag criticism, as you have been trying to do.

I am afraid you are giving an interpretation to the word 'discipline' which I cannot accept. I consider myself to be a stern disciplinarian and I am afraid that in the name of discipline you are trying to check healthy criticism. Discipline does not mean denying a person his constitutional and democratic right.

Apart from the fact that it is our constitutional and democratic right to protest against resolutions which in our view are harmful to the country's cause, a consideration of the merits of the two resolutions will show that such protests were really called for. In our view these two resolutions, if

given effect to, will serve to accentuate the drift towards constitutionalism, to increase the influence, power and authority of the Provincial Ministries at the cost of the Congress organizations, to isolate artificially the Congress from the general public as also the AICC from the rank and file of the Congress. Moreover, they will serve to undermine the revolutionary spirit of the Congress. Consequently, in the best interests of the country, these two resolutions should be immediately held in abeyance and ultimately altered suitably or withdrawn.

In this connection I cannot help drawing your attention to certain incidents at the time of the Gaya Congress in 1922 and after. Please do not forget what the Swaraj party did in those days. Please do not forget either that when the AICC amended the resolution of the Gaya Congress, the Gujarat PCC resolved to defy it.

Lastly, please do not forget that Mahatma Gandhi wrote in *Young India*, if my recollection is correct, that the minority has the right to rebel. We have not gone so far yet as to actually rebel against the decision of the majority. We have simply taken the liberty of criticizing certain resolutions passed by the majority, in the teeth of our opposition.

I am really surprised that you have made so much of what we regard as our inherent right. I hope you will accept my explanation as satisfactory. But if you do not do so, and if you decide to resort to disciplinary action, I shall gladly face it for the same of what I regard as a just cause. In conclusion, I have to request that if any Congressman is penalized in connection with the events of the 9th July, then you will also take action against me. If the observance of an All India Day of the 9th is a crime then I confess, I am the arch-criminal.

With kindest regards,

¹ Rajendra Prasad told Bose on 18 July that 'it will be impossible for the Congress organization to function if subordinate Committee and office-bearers of the Congress, whose duty is to carry out and give effect to the resolutions of the AICC and the Congress, were, instead of doing that, to organize protests and demonstrations against these resolutions.' Such action was 'not only destructive of all discipline but fraught with the gravest consequence for the future of the Congress organization.' *The Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. 2, p. 219.

121. Satyagraha by Women: Serious Agrarian Trouble in Bihar

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 8 August 1939.

Patna
7 August 1939

The following Press Note has been issued by the Information Officer, Government of Bihar:

As a sequel to forcible cultivation by the Kisans of a plot of bakasht land in possession of the landlord in village Majhwe, police-station Hassua, district Gaya, there was a clash between the landlord's men and the Kisans on the 19th July, in which the landlord's men attacked the Kisans, resulting in minor injuries to about 18 Kisans.

With the commencement of the cultivation season for paddy on the 18th July, information was received at the police-station that a party of tenants would resort to forcible cultivation of a plot of bakasht land, measuring 46 bighas, in village Majhwe, in respect of which there was a court decision against the tenants last year and the land was declared to be in possession of the landlord. The Sub-Inspector of Police hastened to the spot and found three ploughs on behalf of the landlord and the same number on behalf of the Kisans at work on the land. The Sub-Inspector tried to reason with the Kisans and asked them to give up forcible ploughing. But the Kisans were in no mood to listen and 150 of them, including 50 women, indulged in the usual demonstration, shouting slogans, etc.

The Sub-Inspector then attempted to arrest the Kisans, who were trespassing on the land but the women formed a ring round the persons to be arrested and prevented the Sub-Inspector from getting at the men. The women also hung round the ploughs which the Sub-Inspector wanted to seize. Thereupon the Sub-Inspector instituted a case under sections 143 (unlawful assembly) and 447 (criminal trespass) IPC against six ring leaders among the Kisans.

While the Sub-Inspector was parleying with the Kisans, one of the men and two women from among the Kisans appeared before him and complained that they had been assaulted by the landlord's men. They had minor bleeding injuries. They refused to go to hospital. The women went over to the field and lay down there.

On the following day, the 19th July, 1939, the Kisans resumed their attack on the land and more women collected this time. At about 10 A.M., when the Sub-Inspector of Police was making an enquiry in the village, 10 to 15 men of the landlord suddenly came on to the field and attempted to disperse the Kisans by force, as a result of which about 18 of the Kisans are reported to have received minor injuries.

On hearing of this clash, the Sub-Inspector rushed to the spot, but by then the assailants had run away. He has instituted a case under section 147(rioting), IPC against the landlord's men.

The Sub-divisional Officer and the Additional Superintendent of Police were immediately on the spot. Adequate police force has been drafted into the village and the situation is being carefully watched. A number of arrests have been made.

122. 'Congress Fight for National Freedom': Acharya Narendra Dev

Hindustan Times, 14 August 1939.

Gorakhpur
11 August 1939

Surveying the present political situation in India and abroad in a long speech at a public meeting held in the Town Hall (Gorakhpur) yesterday evening, Acharya Narendra Dev made a strong plea for unity in the Congress and exhorted the audience to prepare themselves for the future struggle for freedom.

He began by reminding the audience of the national demand that was framed at the Tripuri session of the Congress. He said that, while the Congress was gaining power, British imperialism had been losing its prestige. England had become so weak today that despite her pious profession of protecting democracies she found herself too weak to take any effective measures to check the German, Italian or Japanese aggression, in a way England had been backing the Fascist powers because Chamberlain was more terrified by Socialism than by Fascism. He asked the audience to study the disturbed political situation of Europe, and said that this was just the opportunity when we could strike a blow at British Imperialism and give effect to the resolution on the national demand passed at Tripuri.

Proceeding, he said that the Congress was the only national organization in India. The sacrifices it had made for the national cause had won it popularity at home and prestige abroad. That was why Italy, Germany and Japan were today anxious to win the friendship of the Congress. But Congressmen were not opportunists; they would not sacrifice principles for the sake of small gains and be the allies of Fascism. Japan, too, was taking interest in India, simply because she knew that India was going to achieve independence shortly and British was losing prestige and becoming weak. By cultivating friendship with India, Japan aimed at forming a commercial alliance with an independent India. That was why Japan was carrying on propaganda that she was not enslaving China, but aimed at liberating Asia from European domination.

The other side of the picture, however, was that the Congress was today torn with internal dissensions. With the capture of power by the Congress, opportunists had found their way into it. So far we had fought for freedom in an organized way, but now new parties with new ideologies were making their appearance and wanted to weaken the Congress. Germany particularly wanted to get back her colonies and wanted to create trouble for England in India, in order to achieve her objective abroad. First, she wanted to win the Congress to her side, but the Congress could not support Nazi usurpations of Czechoslovakia. Consequently, Germany was now exploiting communal organizations of the country and those elements in the country which had lost their power in the Congress provinces for Nazi propaganda. They must beware of these dangers. While the Congress was rising in power, these new difficulties were appearing in their way, which had to be surmounted.

The greatest need of the hour was that all the parties in the Congress should sink their petty differences and offer a united front against these dangers. Differences of ideology could not weaken the Congress, but only strengthen it. The past history of the Congress was a witness to this truth. But they must stand united where their programme was concerned. Their main concern was the Congress organization as a whole. If the Congress was weak, both the Right-wing and the Left-wing were weak; if the Congress was strong, both were strong. It could not be denied that the Congress Ministries could not fulfil their hopes, but all the same they must remember their limitations and should overlook their mistakes.

Continuing, the speaker said that they should organize themselves and prepare for the last fight for freedom, for which the disturbed international condition would offer them the best opportunity in the near future. He exhorted the audience to bury their communal differences and to evolve a national social life on the basis of political and financial independence and equality. The Congress had satisfied the minorities. Before the problem of the emancipation of the teeming millions of India, the Hindu-Muslim question must recede to the background...

In the afternoon a meeting of the Congress workers of the district was held in the office, when they expressed their difficulties and sought the guidance and advice of Acharya Narendra Dev. The workers complained about the conduct of honorary magistrates in implicating the tenants by making their servants bring false cases to their courts, and similar complaints were also made against patwaris and sarpanchs. One of the workers said that enrolment of members should not be done during the rainy season, when the tenants had no money and instead it should be carried on in the months when they harvested their crops. Another question was, what should workers do in the event of a European war.

Replying to these questions, Acharya Narendra Dev said that he would note down the names of those honorary magistrates and speak to Kajtu about them, coming to the question as to what would be the duty of the workers in the event of war, he said that they had to take the fullest advantage of Britain's difficulties.

Coming to the constructive programme, he said that the four anna member of the Congress should be called together at least four times a year in their Mandals, and Congress workers should explain to them the resolution of the Congress and the present-day politics and should invite their opinion. The Provincial Congress Committee would shortly issue pamphlets on questions like Federation and war. These should be read out to the villagers and explained to them. Last of all, in order to carry on this programme efficiently, the Congress workers themselves should be given a thorough training. They themselves must know about the present problems and should further know how to explain them to the masses.



123. Congress Working Committee Resolution

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 112–14.

11 August 1939

The Working Committee has given the most anxious consideration to the action of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose, the erstwhile President of the National Congress, in connection with two resolutions of the last meeting of the AICC known as ‘Satyagraha in Provinces’ and ‘Congress Ministries and the PCCs.’ The Working Committee has also considered the long letter of Shri Subhas Babu, appended hereto. The Working Committee with great sorrow and reluctance has come to the conclusion that Subhas Babu has wholly missed the main point raised by the President of the Congress as clearly set forth in his declaration also appended hereto. As ex-President he should have also realized that after having received peremptory instructions from the President it was his clear duty as a servant of the nation to obey them implicitly even though he differed from the ruling of the President. It was open to him, if he felt aggrieved by the ruling, to appeal to the Working Committee or the AICC. But he was bound, so long as the President’s instructions stood, to carry them out faithfully. This is the first condition of the proper functioning of any organization, much more so of a vast organization like the National Congress which is engaged in a life and death struggle with the best organised and most powerful imperialistic corporation in the world. If, what seems to be Subhas Babu’s contention in his letter, that every member is free to interpret the Congress Constitution as he likes, prevails, there will be perfect anarchy in the Congress and it must break to pieces in no time.

The Working Committee has come to the painful conclusion that it will fail in its duty if it condones the deliberate and flagrant breach of discipline by Subhas Babu. The Working Committee therefore resolves that for this grave act of indiscipline Shri Subhas Babu is declared disqualified as President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee for three years as from August 1939.¹ The Working Committee trusts that Shri Subhas Babu will see the error of his ways and loyally submit to this disciplinary action.

The Working Committee has taken note of the indiscipline of many other Congressmen including responsible officials. But it has refrained from taking any action as the members acted under the inspiration of Shri Subhas Babu. The Working Committee, however, leaves it open to Provincial organizations to take action if they think it necessary for the proper observance of discipline and especially if the offending members do not express regret for their indiscipline.

The Committee further empowers the President to take disciplinary action against such members who, instead of expressing regret by their speech or conduct for the indiscipline, persist in it.

¹ This action evolved mixed responses in different quarters. M.S. Aney, for example, felt that the punishment was drastic, and that it would ‘widen the gulf between the two internal forces and thereby weaken the country’s fighting strength.’ *Hitavada*, 16 August 1939. On 14 September a largely attended meeting, under the joint auspices of the CSP and the Students Federation, was held in Raipur. Speakers were all young and they vehemently criticized the action of the High Command and declared that they would be with Bose at any cost. The action taken by the High Command at Wardha, they said, conclusively proved that the Working Committee was determined to suppress the revolutionary spirit in the Congress. *Hitavada*, 20 August 1939.



124. Enrolment of Congress Members

Hindu, 14 August 1939.

14 August 1939

The Madras Congress Socialists Party inaugurated a campaign for the enrolment of Congress members at a public meeting last evening at the High Court Beach.

Mr C.P. Elango, who presided, said that the Socialists were now intent on an intensive campaign to strengthen the Congress and to prepare the country for the coming struggle for independence. At present it seemed to him that those who laid down its policies had deviated from its programme. The Congress was the only organization that could fight British Imperialism and it should be strengthened at all costs.

The Chairman then referred to the disciplinary action taken against Mr Subhas Chandra Bose and said that it was regrettable that the Working Committee should have taken such action. He was glad to read Mr Bose's statement that he would cling to the Congress, whatever action was taken against him. That must be the attitude of every Indian.

Mr B. Srinivasa Rao said that the Congress was tending to become totalitarian in character and it was the duty of Socialists to stop that tendency and make the Congress the real organization of the people. He said that the present position could be changed only if the people strengthened the Congress by joining it in large numbers.

125. On the Presidential Election: Nehru to Sri Prakasa, 15 August 1939

SWJN, Vol. 9, pp. 599–603.

My dear Prakasa,¹

I have just received your letter of August 14th. You will remember that I gave expression to my views pretty fully at the provincial Congress committee meeting on this subject. While I agree with much that you said then, I did feel that the context in which we had to consider all such matters had changed and we could not ignore this. I think that Subhas Bose has acted very wrongly and done considerable injury to the cause and more specially to what might be called the Left. It is perfectly true that the people on the other side have in the past and in the present acted wrongly also. What I am concerned with is not so much the judgment of individuals, as the effect of a particular action on our movement. Unfortunately, we are becoming more and more involved in the consequences of past actions and errors. It is the law of *Karma*, I suppose, which we cannot escape. Or, call it the development of an inevitable Greek tragedy which cannot be stopped.

I confess that I feel very helpless in the middle of two rival groups both of whom seem to me in the wrong. By nature, I do not like forming groups, and in any event, whatever happens, I want to retain a certain integrity of mind and dignity in action. This is difficult enough at any time, more specially in times of extreme crisis. As you know, I am overwhelmed with this sense of impending catastrophe. I find that few persons even among our leading politicians have this sense of tension and this premonition of approaching disaster. I fear we are rapidly heading for what might be called civil war in the real sense of the word in India. Our future conflicts are never going to be on the straight issue of Indian nationalism versus British imperialism. British imperialism in future is certainly going to play an important part in opposing us. But it will do so more from behind the scenes exploiting all manner of other groups to this end. We talk and argue and debate about relatively small matters with this impending fate reserved for us. Anything that weakens us from this point of view seems to me disastrous. I am therefore forced to consider all developments in this context. I realize that it is not good enough to analyse and criticize from a distance. One must

do something much more. But so long as the path is not perfectly clear, I hesitate to do so in this ever-changing situation. It is something at least to avoid a wrong step although one may not take the right one.

It seems to me that owing to the changes in the world situation the whole background and foreground of Indian politics like all other politics have undergone a certain change. I am afraid our old leadership is almost entirely ignorant of this change. But even our advanced elements have not grasped very much and continue to talk in terms of yesterday. Subhas Bose with all his emphasis on leftism talks a language which is peculiarly out of date. His ideal is *De Valera*. Quite apart from the great difference between Ireland and India, I do not think much of *De Valera* as an ideal. There is also a certain crudity about Subhas which is distressing. It is hardly possible to discuss any matter with him in private or in committee. He only listens and gives you the impression that he agrees with what you say and then does something entirely different. I think he is going in a wrong direction completely, and many of his immediate advisers are entirely unreliable. He is becoming a symbol for many people who are bitterly hostile to the Congress and for what it stands. They are exploiting him to this end.

All that I have written about has little to do with the contents of your letter. But I wanted to put before you something that I had in mind, and I wanted you to appreciate how grave the issues are today, and how everything that we do brings consequences in its train of a most serious nature. It is not good our comparing events today with events that took place during a static period.

I was present at the Working Committee meeting when this matter came up. My main function was to discuss Ceylon and the international situation. I felt a little hesitant in interfering otherwise in the proceedings, on many matters, with the members. When Subhas' matter came up I informed the Committee of the UP council's decision.² I further told them of your proposal which though not passed appeared to have the goodwill of most of our members. The Committee considered many things some of which are not before you and which indicated the serious consequences that are flowing from certain actions. Their task was not made easier by the persistent defiance which Subhas Bose showed. Nevertheless, I felt sure in my mind that no serious disciplinary action should have been taken.³ My own idea was that he should resign from the presidentship of the BPCC. Nothing more was necessary. However, after long discussion, the Working Committee decided as they have done. As I have mentioned above, I did not like, as a non-member, to take too aggressive a part in their deliberations or decisions. I placed my view point and that was as much as I cared to do.

I think that the Working Committee's decision has been very unfortunate and it will harm us. But I do not see where decency and morality come in. The whole attitude adopted by Subhas was not in consonance with either of these qualities and it becomes very difficult for an organization to be tolerant of deliberate defiance specially at a moment when that defiance is being exploited by others for their own ends.

In any event I do not quite see how the action suggested by you for yourself follows from the Working Committee's decision.⁴ It is no good acting on the spur of the moment in a matter of grave importance. I hope you will reconsider your position.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Narendra Deva who will be functioning as president of the UPPCC, soon. I am sending your original letter to Gandhiji so that he might know how you and some others feel in the matter. Perhaps he might write to you directly.

I hope to leave for China on the 20th August if war in Europe does not break out meanwhile.

¹ Sri Prakasa (1890–1971); educated in Allahabad and Cambridge; associated with the *Leader* (Allahabad) and the *Independent*; member of the AICC (1918–45); General Secretary of the UP Provincial Congress Committee (1928–34)

and of the AICC (1929–31); founded along with his father Bhagwan Das, the Kashi Vidyapith; India's High Commissioner to Pakistan (1947–49); Governor of Assam, Cabinet Minister (1950–52) and Governor of Madras (1952–56).

² It said: 'The Council... desires to make it clear that office-bearers and all members of Executive Committees of the Congress should not participate in any demonstrations against the resolutions or the declared policy of the Congress, the All India Congress Committee, the Working Committee, the Provincial Congress Committee and this Council, nor should they indulge in any activity which might lower any of these committees, or this organization itself, in public esteem.'

³ On 11 August 1939, the Congress Working Committee disqualified Bose from the presidency of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and debarred him from membership of any elective Congress committee for three years from August 1939 owing to his show of 'grave indiscipline'.

⁴ Sri Prakasa proposed to resign from the Congress, but was persuaded by Mahatma Gandhi not to do so.

126. The Disciplinary Action

Forward, 19 August 1939.

19 August 1939

None can feel happy over the action that the Working Committee has taken on Sjt Subhas Chandra Bose and its probable consequences. Despite the counterfeit congratulations, accorded to him from several quarters, it must be recognized that an organization is far greater than any of its members, however great. Nariman, Khare or Subhas Bose are very different inside and outside the Congress. The appraisal of the significant event, however, calls for calm and unprejudiced deliberation over the settings and events of recent history.

At the crucial moment Subhas Babu failed. He refused to discharge the obligations of a position democratically granted to him. He did not form the alternative cabinet that could easily step into the shoes left behind by the resigning members of the High Command. He fondly clung to the fantastic idea of a composite cabinet of revolutionist and anti-revolutionists to lead a revolutionary movement. He simply funked. The tremendous responsibilities unnerved him. But his constitutional craving for positions drove him from absurdity to absurdity in the pursuit of his political motto: 'Look more strong than you really are.' Him-self unnerved, he unsuccessfully tried this method to unnerve the High Command into conceding him position.

A position granted him by the democracy, was lost to the tactics of the oligarchy. He gave himself up to anger. He was guided by this anger when he formed the Forward Bloc and when he announced July 9 demonstrations. His concern for democratic rights assailed by the AICC resolutions was mere pretence.... By leftist slogans he endeavoured to noose behind his provincial communal following from Bengal the unthinking mass of Left-looking opinion in the country. But he betrayed his clay feet in his correspondence with Gandhiji where he was *partinaciously* kissing a hand that never ceased smitting him... Subhas Babu's weakness has brought upon him a drastic disciplinary measure.... The disproportionateness of the present sentence has defeated to an extent the very purpose of the High Command have in view. Rather than increasing their prestige it has given Subhas Babu an advantage in so far as he has gained in public sympathy.

The power politics of Subhas Babu has helped other forces in throwing Bengal into tremendous confusion and conflict. Already the advocates of a homogeneous Left Cabinet—the only existing revolutionary section in the country and the Gandhites—have been thrust into the same boat. Already Leftism in Bengal has allowed itself to be shamefully corrupted into synonym for opportunism. Already politicians and personalities are hated on grounds of their belonging to this province or that. Already even Congress politicians are infected with hatred and suspicious of a communal character. Now, virtually cut off from the rest of India, Subhas Babu cannot simply do without bringing to a hand the existing confusion and conflict on everyone of those lines. Attempt is bound to continue to keep up crowd emotionalism by making up a chorus of anti-Federation,

pro-struggle and other Leftist slogans and anti-Award, pro-Mahasabha and other reactionary cries; the patronage to Kisan Sabha may blend with compliments to capitalists. As a result, the Congress may cease to function in the province at least for some time to come and at least in spirit. Of course, there is very little of the Congress spirit in Bengal for the last few years.

On the other hand, it must be recognized that the action against Subhas Babu is only the beginning. Everybody knows, Subhas Babu does not differ vitally or in political principles from the reformist High Command. He might easily have been won over. Why the High Command did not choose to do so, that is another matter. But the punitive action has been taken. There are others whom the High Command have reasons to look upon as more serious opponents. When they speak of anti-Imperialist struggle, they mean business. With them the struggle begins with the struggle for the total replacement of the Rightist defenders of the imperialist connection. As against their tremendous resources, it will be a job to marshal the mass forces to rescue the Congress organization for a revolutionary leadership and for a revolutionary struggle. But that is the job ahead.

127. On Action Against Bose

‘On Bose’s Expulsion’, *Hitavada*, 20 August 1939.

Raipur
20 August 1939

On 14th September another monster meeting under the joint auspices of the CSP and the Students Federation was held at the Gandhi Chowk at 8 P.M. to congratulate Mr Bose. The speakers were all young and they vehemently criticized the action of the High command and declared that they would be with Mr Bose at any cost. The action taken by the High Command at Wardha, they said, conclusively proved that the Working Committee was determined to suppress the revolutionary spirit in the Congress. Mr Subhas Mal Lunia speaking first deplored that the mentality of the rightist had been degraded to such an extent that they now vie with one another to give honour and respect to government officials.

This is all due to the policy of constitutionalism and compromises that the Rightists of late are following. Coms. Sanyal, Sen Gupta and in the end Com. Rauf, who was presiding, vehemently challenged the declaration of Mr Desai on the previous day when he was presented with an address by the DCC that the country was not prepared for another struggle with the British Imperialism. They said that the country was prepared, while the leaders themselves were not prepared; the leaders by foisting their own weakness on the people were avoiding the issue. When Mr Bose tried to prepare the country for another and final struggle, the High Command gagged him by disciplinary action. This action itself showed as to who are prepared for the struggle and who are not.

The meeting terminated late at night with cries of ‘Inquilab Zindabad’, ‘Subhas Babu Zindabad’, ‘Forward bloc Zindabad’.

128. Congress Workers in Conference

Hindu, 22 August 1939.

21 August 1939

A conference of Congress workers in the Vizagapatnam district was held last evening in the Congress House at Anakapalle, under the presidentship of Mr V.V. Jogiah Pantulu, MLC. The conference

was convened by Mr G.B. Appa Rao and Mr M. Jagannadha Rao and was attended by over one hundred Congress workers representing all the groups within the Congress in this district.

Mr G.B. Appa Rao, explaining the purpose of the conference, said that it was necessary to remove factions within the Congress and consolidate the rank and file of Congress workers with a view to carrying on a useful and vigorous constructive national programme. The Congress should be so purified as to make it fit for the re-entry of Gandhiji into the Congress. Reviewing the work of the Congress Ministry, he observed that a widening gulf was developing between the Congress Parliamentary Party and the masses.

Mr M. Jagannadha Rao, observed that ever since the Congress accepted office, there had been an influx into Congress organizations of political exploiters and there seemed to be no place for tried and genuine Congress workers.

Mr V.V. Jogiah Pantulu said that propaganda had to be carried on among the masses by Congress workers to popularize the work of the Congress Ministry. He referred to the existing estrangement between the Congress Committees and a vast body of Congress workers and urged that unity was absolutely necessary. He invited the views of those who had assembled there on the present situation.

Dr G. Narayanamurti stated that after office acceptance there had been a deterioration in the Congress. The Parliamentary programme of the Congress should have been restricted to the Legislatures and not extended to local boards and municipalities and the Congress Committees should have been left to carry on the extra-Parliamentary constructive programme of the Congress.

Dr M.V. Krishna Rao said that a wide gulf existed today between tried Congress workers and the Provincial Congress authorities. The opponents of the official Congress organizations at present happened to be young men who had suffered and sacrificed in the name of the Congress. The Congress today had no programme except the Parliamentary programme and no work except conducting elections and settling election disputes. Legitimate criticism was sought to be suppressed and the Congress organizations were more concerned with disciplinary action used as a form of intimidation rather than with any useful constructive work.

Mr P. Venkata Rao, President of the Nellimarla Labour Union, said it had become very difficult to carry on Congress propaganda among the masses. If Congress prestige was to be saved, the Congress had to give up office and take to more radical work. In short, it should immediately launch a national struggle.

Mr M. Narasimhamurti observed that instead of wrecking the constitution, all endeavour was being made to oil and grease the unwanted machinery to make it work smooth.

Mr M.V.V. Satyanarayana observed that members of the Provincial Legislature were given a monthly allowance and were made whole time political workers so that they might keep the Congress Government in close touch with the masses. But in fact no legislator had any kind of actual touch with his constituency.

Mr K. Buchiraju said that if the Congress structure was to be kept strong and pure, necessary care should be exercised in the enlistment of four anna members. No one who did not believe in khaddar should be allowed to become a member.

Mr K. Satyanarayana deplored the existence of Fascist tendencies in the Congress and urged the necessity for the infusion of a really democratic spirit in Congress organizations.

Mr B.S. Mallikarjuna Rao stated that the time had come when Congressmen should consider whether the organizations officially called the Congress Committees were really working in the spirit of the Congress.

Mr K. Lingamurti, Chairman of the Anakapalle Municipality, said he found very little in the Municipality, which he could do as a Congress Chairman. There was nothing which Congressmen

could do to advance the ideal of the Congress by working the Parliamentary programme, whether in the Government, the Legislature, local boards or municipalities.

129. Congress 'Bull' Against Bose: Statement by M.N. Roy

Leader, 24 August 1939.

22 August 1939

In the course of a press statement, M.N. Roy says:

'The Working Committee resolution to take disciplinary action against Subhas Chandra Bose is not altogether unexpected. But its severity will shock not only the general public, but a great majority of Congressmen. The term 'great majority' is purposely used, because it is as yet too early to forget that only six months ago he was elected president of the Congress in the teeth of the opposition of all the most authoritative leaders. That might not have been a vote for Subhas Babu personally, nor a vote of no-confidence against the leaders who opposed his candidature. But that was certainly a demonstration of dissatisfaction against the present leadership and the prevalent state of affairs inside the Congress. Nothing has happened in the meantime to remove that dissatisfaction. It has only been driven underground by manoeuvres of those in power which became successful because of the absence of any determined alternative leadership. Therefore, the latest act of the Working Committee for putting down a 'rebel' is not likely to be very popular. By its frantic efforts to retain its monopolistic hold on the Congress machinery, the present leadership is weakening its position morally. Incidentally, such acts may prove very harmful for the Congress itself.

'The resolution is deplorable because it is not really necessary. A condemnation of July 9 demonstration defying the presidential ban and a warning against the repetition of such behaviour would have served the purpose of maintaining discipline and discouraging fissiparous tendencies. I am afraid that the resolution may defeat its purpose. Instead of protecting the unity of the Congress, it may drive a major provincial organization into open revolt against the central authority. That would be most unfortunate. The possibility of such dangerous developments should have weighed with the Working Committee.

'It is a bad precedent for the Working Committee to override the demo by declaring its elected president as disqualified to hold the position. If this act goes unchallenged there will be no guarantee whatsoever for the internal democracy of the Congress. The precedent is all the more dangerous because the encroachment upon the democratic right of a provincial organization takes place on a very flimsy pretext. The more democratic course should have been for the Working Committee to call upon the primary Congressmen of Bengal to disown a provincial executive with its office-bearers which have committed a breach of discipline. In any case, if the supreme leadership of the Congress cannot secure the support of the majority of the membership in any particular province, its efforts to assert its authority are bound to complicate the situation there. That is the worst part of the Working Committee resolution. It will create a very difficult and delicate situation in Bengal.

'I am very anxious about the possibility. I do not know how the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee will react to the resolution of the Working Committee, nor do I know if Subhas Babu will stick to the reasonable and conciliatory attitude that he adopted towards the end of the conflict. However, if he allows himself to be provoked once again, he will be helping neither himself, nor the Congress, nor the political life of Bengal. Therefore, I earnestly hope that he will reconcile himself to the regrettable situation which, to a large extent, is his creation, and discourage any idea of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee resisting the Working Committee resolution. Having

a formal majority, he might be tempted to do so, but that will spell disaster for the political life of Bengal. There will be two Congress organizations in the province, one of which, headed by himself, will surely be disaffiliated. Besides, it is a fact that there is a good deal of discontent against him in Bengal; there he has not acted by democratically. That being the case, he should be shrewd enough to anticipate that an artificially created majority might not stand by him in a hopeless conflict with the entire Congress organization of the country. The evil effect of the unwise (or is it vindictive?) action on the part of the Working Committee will be headed off only if a majority of Congressmen in Bengal can act with foresight and idealism the democratic critic right of a provincial committee.'

130. Gandhi's Statement to the Press

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 112–14.

Segaon
23 August 1939

I continue to receive letters, mostly abusive, about what may be called the Subhas Babu resolution of the Working Committee. I also saw a letter addressed to Rajendra Babu, which can hardly be surpassed in the use of filthy language.¹ I have seen some criticisms about the war resolution.

I owe it to the public to make my position clear about both these resolutions. I must confess that the Subhas Babu resolution was drafted by me. I can say that the members of the Working Committee would have shirked the duty of taking action if they could have. They knew that there would be a storm of opposition against their action. It was easier for them to have a colourless resolution than to have one which was no respecter of person. Not to take some action would have amounted to abdication of their primary function of preserving discipline among Congressmen. Subhas Babu had invited action. He had gallantly suggested that if any action was to be taken it should be taken against him as the prime mover. In my opinion the action taken by the Working Committee was the mildest possible. There was no desire to be vindictive. Surely the word vindictiveness loses all force and meaning when the position of Subhas Babu is considered. He knew that he could not be hurt by the Working Committee. His popularity had put him above being affected by any action that the Working Committee might take. He had pitted himself against the Working Committee, if not the Congress organization. The members of the Working Committee, therefore, had to perform their duty and leave the Congressmen and the public to judge between themselves and Subhas Babu. It has been suggested that Subhas Babu has done what I would have done under similar circumstances. I cannot recall a single instance in my life of having done what Subhas Babu has done, that is, defied an organization to which I owed allegiance. I could understand rebellion after secession from such an organization. That was the meaning and secret of the non-violent non-cooperation of 1920.

But I am not penning these lines so much to justify the action of the Working Committee as to appeal to Subhas Babu and his supporters to take the decision of the Working Committee in the right spirit and submit to it while it lasts. He has every right to appeal to the AICC against the decision. If he fails there, he can take the matter before the annual session of the Congress. All this can be done without bitterness and without imputing motives of the worst type of the members of the Working Committee. Why not be satisfied with the belief that the members have committed an error or judgment? I fancy that if a majority of the AICC members signify in writing their disapproval of the action of the Working Committee the latter will gladly resign. By imputing motives whenever there are differences of opinion, Congressmen pull down the structure that has been built up by the patient labour of half a century. Indeed, even if a bad motive is suspected, it

is better to refrain from imputing it, unless it can be proved beyond doubt. It is necessary for the sake of healthy public education that leaders of public opinion should judge events and decisions on their merits.

On the war resolution I had a conclusive defeat. I was invited to draft a resolution, and so was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. I was proud of my draft, but my pride went before destruction. I saw that I could not carry my resolution unless I argued and pressed for it. But I had no such desire. We then listened to Jawaharlal's. And I at once admitted that it represented more truly than mine the country's opinion and even the Working Committee's as a whole. Mine was based upon out-and-out non-violence. If the Congress heartily believed in non-violence in its fullness even as a policy, this was its testing time. But Congressmen, barring individual exceptions, do not believe in such non-violence. Those who do, believe that it is the right thing only for a fight against the Government for wresting power. But the Congress has no non-violent message for the world. I would fain believe that the Congress had such a message. The conclusion to both the resolutions need not have been radically different. But the motive power being different the same conclusion would bear a different meaning in a different setting. In the face of the violence going on in India itself and in the face of the fact that Congress Governments have been obliged to fall back upon military and police assistance, a declaration to the world of non-violence would have seemed a mockery. It would have carried no weight in India or with the world. Yet, to be true to myself, I could not draft any other resolution than I did.

The fate, to which I was party, of my resolution proved the wisdom of my withdrawal of official connection with the Congress. I attend the Working Committee meetings not to identify myself with its resolutions or even its general policy. I attend in the pursuit of my mission of non-violence. So long as they want my attendance I go there to emphasize non-violence in their acts and through them in those of Congressmen. We pursue the same goal. They all of them would go the whole length with me if they could, but they want to be true to themselves and to the country which they represent for the time being, even as I want to be true to myself. I know that the progress of non-violence is seemingly a terribly slow process. But experience has taught me that it is the surest way to the common goal. There is deliverance neither for India nor for the world through clash of arms. Violence, even for vindication of justice, is almost played out. With that belief I am content to plough a lonely furrow, it is to be my lot that I have no co-sharer in the out-and-out belief in non-violence.

¹ There was support as well in certain quarters. In an editorial comment on 24 August 1939, the *Bombay Chronicle* observed: 'Gandhiji has good reason to issue a statement in defence of the Congress Working Committee's disciplinary action against Subhas Chandra Bose. The Committee to a man loyally pursues the principles for which he stands and when in carrying out those principles it is openly defied by several Congressmen and finds it necessary to take disciplinary action against their leader. Gandhiji naturally feels constrained to defend the Committee particularly because he himself drafted the resolution which it finally adopted. In defending the Committee Gandhiji rightly observes that not to take any action in the circumstances "would have amounted to abdication of their primary function for preserving discipline among Congress". It would have been nearly as bad to adopt "a colourless resolution" against "a prime mover" rather than one "which was no respecter of persons".'



131. Defiance of the AICC Resolution

AICC Papers, File No.G-44/1939, NMML.

*Congress House
Bombay No. 4
23 August 1939*

Resolution

‘The Executive of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee is of opinion that the conduct of (1) Sjt K.F. Nariman, (2) Sjt Rajaram Panday, (3) Sjt G.M. Adhikari,¹ (4) Sjt C.K. Narayanaswamy, (5) Sjt R.K. Kelkar, (6) Smt. Maniben Kara, (7) Sjt Bhagwandas Kapadia and (8) Sjt B.T. Ranadive in participating in the proceedings of the meeting held on 9th of July to protest against the two resolutions of the last meeting of the All India Congress Committee known as “Satyagraha in the Provinces” and “Congress Ministries and Provincial Congress Committees”, is a serious breach of discipline and resolves that the said (1) Sjt K.F. Nariman, (2) Sjt Rajaram Panday, (3) Sjt G.M. Adhikari, (4) Sjt C.K. Narayanaswamy, (5) Sjt R.K. Kelkar, (6) Smt. Maniben Kara, (7) Sjt Bhagwandas Kapadia and (8) Sjt B.T. Ranadive be and are hereby removed from their positions as members of any elective committee or body or any elective office, including that of a delegate, a member of the AICC, a member of the BPCC and a member of the Executive Council of any DCC, which they respectively hold at present and are declared disqualified from standing as candidates for any of the positions mentioned above within the Congress organization for a period of two years from this day (23rd August 1939).’

The Executive trust that all loyal Congressmen in the City of Bombay would support this action and thereby uphold the dignity of the great organization to which they have the honour to belong.

Bhulabhai J. Desai
President

¹ Gangadhar M. Adhikari (1898–1981); educated at Bombay; joined Berlin University in 1922 where he secured a doctorate degree in engineering; came into contact with the revolutionaries in Berlin, including M.N. Roy; returned to India in July 1928 and brought news of the Comintern’s new leftist line; attended the CPI and WPP conferences held in Calcutta in December 1928; arrested, tried and imprisoned with 29 other communist leaders in connection with the Meerut Conspiracy Case; released in the summer of 1933; active in trade union work in Bombay in the 1930s; joined, P.C. Joshi, Ajoy Kumar Ghosh and R.D. Bhardwaj as member of the CPI Politbureau; the CPI’s position on the Pakistan question is attributed to him; served on its Central Committee from 1943 to 1950 and from 1953 until his death.

132. Srinivasa Iyengar’s Resignation from the Congress: Protest Against Recent Policies

Hindu, 28 August 1939.

28 August 1939

S. Srinivasa Iyengar writes: From the reactions to the speeches that I have been making since last December I feel I must discharge my duty to the people of this Province by continuing to be in public life as actively as I can. That duty itself requires that I should mark my protest against the recent trends in the Congress: its complete identification with its Ministerial parties so as to consolidate power rather than to resolve differences or to march forward, its making the Provincial Congress Committees subordinate to the Ministerial Parties, its iron resolve to suppress all public

criticism of Ministerial activities by Congressmen, its most recent action consisting of the series of expulsions for two or three years from Congress Committees of radical and ardent Congressmen, who did not submit to the will of the majority, its long vacillation and final abandonment of the cause of the people of the Indian States, its refusal to instruct the Provincial Cabinets to enlarge the limits of the constitution by bringing about open constitutional conflicts and its failure to insist upon the Congress Cabinet in this province, not to apply the Criminal law (Amendment) Act, but to repeal it ...

There is no object in anyone being a Congress member if all that he has to do is only to give in public his support to whatever the Working Committee does or whatever the Congress Ministries may do. A Congressman must have full liberty to canvass in public the policies, the decisions, the programmes and activities of the Working Committee and of the several Ministries on their true merits.

I regret, therefore, that I can mark my protest against the recent policies in the Congress and regain my full freedom of speech and of criticism and my usefulness to the public (including the Congressmen, who are obliged to be silent) only by resigning my four-anna membership of the Congress and with it my ex-officio membership of the All-India Congress Committee and of the Provincial Congress Committee ...

I believe that I can do more useful and active work by educating the people to carry out what were and what should be today the five ideals of the Congress, viz., complete Independence, complete Nationalism, complete Democracy, complete Justice and complete Secularism. In the course I am taking I have the high example of Gandhiji to support me. By resigning my four-anna membership of the Congress I shall not cease to be a true Congressman at heart or in public life, any more than Gandhiji has ceased to be one. Such services as I can render will always be at the disposal of Congressmen and non-Congressmen alike. There is no question whatever of my going back into retirement again and I shall consider it a great privilege to re-enroll myself as a member when the Congress gives up its present policy, restores the Provincial Congress Committee to its old independence and allows full liberty of public criticism to its members and the formation of genuine and effective radical groups within the organization.

133. Electoral Duty

Editorial, *Hindu*, 30 August 1939.

30 August 1939

The by-election to the Madras Legislative Council from the South Arcot general constituency will be held on Monday next. It is a Congress seat; at the last general election the Congress candidate polled 398 votes against 156 for the only opponent. Mr Omandur Ramaswami Reddiar, the President of the Tamil Nadu Provincial Congress Committee, is himself contesting the by-election on behalf of the Congress. While it may be safely assumed that there will be 'no change' and that the constituency will give renewed proof of its confidence in the Congress Party, it may not be out of place to remind the electorate that larger issues than local ones are involved. Now, of all times, there is need for showing that the people are solidly behind the premier political organization of the country; one, that has striven with more courage, and also with greater success than any other political party to ameliorate the condition of the masses. In doing this the Ministry has necessarily had to tread on many corns, and it is but natural that it should have invited the opposition, if not the wrath, of individuals or small sections of the community here and there. With a comprehensive programme that admitted of no compromise or tinkering, this was perhaps inevitable. 'Today I

am the most hated man in the South,' said the Prime Minister to a Poona audience last week-end. Various interests, he said, hated him for various reasons. Each and every measure he had brought forward affected one interest or the other and, therefore, had evoked considerable opposition. Consequently, there was a rally of all anti-Congress elements, which, however, only demonstrated how weak even a united front of anti-Congress forces was when ranged against the Congress.

There is reason to fear that in the South Arcot by-election, attempts will be made to sidetrack the main issue by raising alarmist cries like 'Religion in danger', 'Tamil in danger', 'Trade in danger' and so on. Even so, it is clear that the Congress is prepared to be judged by the popular verdict. To take a specific instance, the recent developments in the matter of the entry of Harijans into temples will be prominent before the electorate. Viewed in their proper setting, these developments and the policy pursued by the Ministry will be seen to follow naturally from the fundamental position taken up by the Congress openly and always, in regard to the removal of the curse of untouchability. It is contended by some that public opinion, which is admittedly a pre-requisite of the reform, is not there; here is an opportunity for the popular voice to be heard. The Premier, in his letter to the party candidate, has put the issue thus:

The electorate has to choose whether it wants Congress, with the removal of untouchability, or whether it prefers that the nation should continue in the same state of semi-servility as hitherto. Congress is pledged to free the Harijans even as it is pledged to free the land from foreign rule. The latter objective is impossible of attainment through non-violence, unless we do the right by the Harijans and acquire the moral claim to guide the people as a whole.

With the issue re-stated thus clearly, there can be no doubt (that) the electorate will reaffirm its faith in the Congress.

134. Bengal PCC on Bose's Expulsion

'On Bose's Expulsion', *Hindustan Standard*, 31 August 1939.

31 August 1939

Following a stormy sitting lasting more than four hours the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee at a special general meeting held at the University Institute Hall on Wednesday ratified, by 213 votes to 138, the decision taken by its Executive Council at an emergency meeting on August 25 last, deploring the recent decisions of the Congress Working Committee removing the elected president of the BPCC from his Office and invalidating the election of the Provincial Executive Council and the provincial Election Tribunal, reaffirming full confidence in Subhas Bose, hoping that even at this stage the Working Committee would reconsider and rescind its decisions and deciding that pending the final decision of the Working Committee, the post of the President of the BPCC be kept vacant and all its business be transacted in consultation with Mr Bose.

The 138 members who voted against the resolution belonged to the groups led by Mr B.C. Roy, Dr Prafulla Chandra Ghose (the two members who now represent Bengal in the Congress Working Committee) and Mr Kiran Shankar Roy.¹

The votes were counted thrice. The first time the voting was by a show of hands, then the House was asked to divide, and last time the President had all the membership cards collected on his table with their votes recorded in the cards before the result of the voting was finally announced.

Dr Prafulla Chandra Ghose and Mr Kiran Shankar Roy who attended the meeting, were mobbed by an excited crowd in front of the gate of the Institute as they were leaving at the close of the meeting. As Mr Ghose and Mr Roy were proceeding from the gate to their car, the excited crowd surged round them when, jeering them as they proceeded, when a number of up-countrymen

armed with big lathis fell upon the crowd. In the melee that took place some of the Congressmen received injuries. The excited crowd pressed round the car by which Mr Ghose and Mr Roy boarded when the police dispersed the crowd...

¹ Kiran Shankar Ray (1891–1949); educated in Dacca, St Xavier's College, Calcutta and New College, Oxford; called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn in 1921; travelled from England to India with Gandhi on the same boat in 1914; joined the Congress in 1921 and the Swaraj Party in 1923; Secretary of the party (1923) and of the Bengal PCC in 1927; elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1935; leader of the Opposition Party and of the Congress in the Bengal Assembly (1940); served as Home Minister in B.C. Roy's cabinet after independence.

135. Lakshmibai Rajwade to the General Secretary, AIWC Papers, Gwalior, 19 September 1939

AIWC Papers (Microfilm), File No. 215, NMML.

The defeat of Dr Deshmukh's Divorce Bill as also the manner in which the Central Assembly and the Government dealt with it make a sorry comment on all the resounding talk that one hears about social reform in this country. It is realized that it was very unfortunate that this bill should have come up at a time when every body's attention was diverted towards much more fundamental things than a mere legal remedy for removing one of women's hardships. At the same time we cannot forget that even when the country's attention was not so diverted the Central Assembly perilously came near levity in dealing with a subject which is after all of very vital importance to our present social life. We are forced to conclude from this exhibition, that either a majority of men in the Central Assembly are not aware of the very urgent need for a social reform of this kind, or in spite of their personal convictions they imagine that their support of a reform of this nature may ultimately make them unpopular in their constituencies. In either case women all over the country will feel deeply disillusioned about the cooperation and understanding from men, of which they had so far been quite sure.

Women's organizations all over the country therefore should now, redouble their efforts to get a similar bill and other social reform measures initiated again and again, until they appear on the statute book. This effort will have to be all the greater now that the supporters of social reforms for women among men are not to be found in any large number in the ranks of our Central Legislators. What will really meet the situation is a bill much more comprehensive than Dr Deshmukh's bill, to be introduced again in the Central Assembly and backed by a redoubled propaganda by all women's organizations. The All-India Women's Conference will certainly not allow the matter to rest here and will make an effort to frame such a bill and have it sponsored in the legislature. It calls upon all women's organizations in the country to join in the effort.

136. Women's Liberties and Communism

Article by Arjun Arora, *Kranti* (Hindi), September 1939.

September 1939

[Extracts]

The views of Communists regarding women's liberties have been subjected to criticism in India and elsewhere. The criticism is that Communists (a) believe in nationalization of property. They regard women as social property and thus destroy family life; that (b) by giving equal rights to women, including the right to divorce, the Communists undermine the basis of fidelity. By denying

the religious aspect of marriage and by taking mutual love between the bride and groom as the chief basis of marital relationships, the Communists destroy traditions of social sanctions.

We shall reply briefly to all these criticisms, which will make it clear that the views of the Communists are deliberately misrepresented, with the result that their views regarding women are easily misunderstood. The position of women in the Soviet Union, where a Communist society has been established, will bear out our arguments.

It is true that the Communists believe in the nationalization of property, and by abolishing the right to private property, establish social control over it. But how can this be construed to mean that they regard women as social property? They do not consider women to be anyone's property at all. How can nationalization of property include women? The Communists regard men and women as equal and bestow equal rights upon them. They provide equal opportunities to men and women to utilize the national wealth.

If it is a crime to give equal rights to men and women and to give them an equal status in society, then the Communists are certainly guilty. But it is our claim that these are no crimes. Guilty are those who do not recognize one half of society as equal to the other. Society needs both halves. If either half is incapacitated it harms society as a whole and places impediments in the path of progress. Communists would never tolerate this. Under all circumstances men and women must have equal rights. Even when a woman gets married, it should not be construed that she is in permanent bondage to the man. Marriage should not mean that women must sacrifice their rights or that their husbands become the custodians of those rights. But it does not mean that domestic life should not be happy or that there be constant discord. A happy family is one in which both partners are contented. Generally, a happy family life is taken to mean that the man must never be put to any trouble and that the woman must keep him happy even at the cost of being unhappy herself. Communists refuse to accept this definition of a happy family life. The Communist goal is equal rights for men and women in the running of the household and contentment of both. Why should this be labeled as an attack on fidelity?

In cases where husbands and wives are incompatible and their dispositions and tastes are wholly divergent, which make it impossible for them to live happily together, would it not be cruel to keep them tied together by their marriage vows? Communists will not be a party to such an arrangement. Why judge them to be guilty? Communists merely say that if a husband and wife are unable to live together, to love each other, if even one of them is not fully satisfied with the other, why not give them the right to divorce? After all, in such cases, that is the only way to happiness. What is wrong if the Communists feel that men and women should have the right to divorce? Is it the canon of fidelity that the women should be tied to her husband even at the cost of being perpetually dissatisfied? Which woman would accept such fidelity?

Communists do not accept the religious aspect of marriage. They know of only one yardstick for marriage—compatibility, mutual love, and their desire to get married ...

IV OCTOBER–DECEMBER

137. Trade Unions in India: Women Membership on Increase

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 15 October 1939.

New Delhi

14 October 1939

An increase in the number of registered unions to 420 coupled with an increase in total membership to 390,112, and an increase in the number of women members to 14,703—all highest figures yet

recorded—these are some of the salient facts brought out in the latest note on the working of the Indian Trade Unions Act for 1937–38, just published by the Government of India.

Registration under the Act, with consequent submission of returns, is not compulsory. The Note is, therefore, confined to trade unions which are registered and have submitted returns.

The number of registered trade unions increased in all the provinces, except Orissa and Ajmer–Merwar. In Ajmer–Merwar, there was no change, while the only trade union, which Orissa had, was dissolved.

3.8 per cent of the members of trade unions submitting returns were women, as compared with 3.4 per cent in the previous year.

The largest number of unions, namely 104, were in the group having a membership of between 100 and 299, and had a total membership of over 20,000, the next largest number 50 were in the group with a membership of between 500 and 999 and had a total membership of over 34,000; and the third largest group 48 had a membership of between 300 and 499.

138. On the Congress Leadership: Gandhi to Jawaharlal Nehru, 26 October 1939

Jawaharlal Nehru (ed.), *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Asian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1958, p. 394.

Segaon, Wardha

My dear Jawaharlal,

I could see that though your affection and regard for me remain undiminished, differences in outlook between us are becoming most marked. Perhaps this is the most critical period in our history. I hold very strong views on the most important questions which occupy our attention. I know you too hold strong views on them but different from mine. Your mode of expression is different from mine. I am not sure that I carry the other members with me in the views that I hold very strongly. I cannot move about. I cannot come in direct touch with the masses, not even with the Congress workers. I feel that I must not lead if I cannot carry you all with me. There should be no divided counsels among the members of the Working Committee. I feel that you should take full charge and lead the country, leaving me free to voice my opinion. But if you all thought that I should observe complete silence, I should, I hope, find no difficulty in complying. If you think it worth while, you should come and discuss the whole thing.

139. Amendment to the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1939

Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML.

Whereas it is expedient further to amend the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act 1937, for the purpose hereinafter appearing; it is hereby enacted as follows:

- (1) This Act may be called the Hindu Women's Rights to Property (Amendment) Act 1939.
- (2) It will have retrospective effect from the 14th April 1937.
- (3) In Section 3 of the Hindu Women's Right to Amendment to Section 3, Act XVIII of 1937. Property Act, 1937—

- (a) to sub-section (1) the following further provisions shall be added, namely:

'Provided further that in the absence of a widow or a son or a son's son of the intestate, the property of the deceased shall devolve on his daughters, subject to the limitations and in the order provided by the Hindu Law in this behalf:

Provided also that in the last mentioned case if there is widow of a predeceased son existing with one or more maiden daughters, she shall inherit as a maiden daughter and if there is no maiden daughter but one or more married daughters having a son or sons the predeceased son's widow shall inherit as one of such daughters and if the daughter dies leaving a son or sons, the son or sons shall inherit, their mother's share along with the son's widow or son's son's widow or son's son's son's widow'; and

(b) in sub-section (3), for the word 'widow' the word 'woman' shall be substituted.

The object of this Bill is to give to a daughter that right of inheritance to which she is entitled under the text of Yajnavalkya and Vishnu and other exponents of Hindu Law and to which she is entitled in equity and justice.

A.C. Datta

Mr Akhil Chandra Datta (Chittagong and Rajshahi Divisions: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I move:

'That the Bill further to amend the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act, 1937, be taken into consideration.'

The object of the Bill is to make provision about the inheritance of Hindu daughters. I shall say at once that it is not proposed to give any new rights to the Hindu daughter. It seeks only to restore her to the position which she had occupied from time immemorial. Every one who has studied the Hindu law knows that, under both the schools of Hindu laws, the Dayabhaga and the Mitakshara, Hindu daughters come in after sons, grandsons and great grandsons. Then comes the widow and then comes the daughter. But the law, as it now stands, or rather as it has been standing for the past eighteen months, has already changed. However, I do not like to take up the time of the House further at this stage. It cannot be disputed that all that the Bill seeks to do is to give her a right which, according to the Hindu scriptures, according to case law, and according to all authorities, she did enjoy ever since; that is the position sought to be given. So at this stage I should not like to say more. There is a motion also for circulation I may say I shall accept it when it is moved.

Mr President (Abdul Rahim): Motion moved:

'That the Bill further to amend the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act, 1937, be taken into consideration.'

Dr P.N. Banerjea (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Sir, I move:

'That the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon.'

Sir, this Bill seeks to amend the existing law relating to Hindu women's rights to property. Although I think the object is a desirable and a laudable one, there may be differences of opinion amongst members of the Hindu community. Therefore, I think it necessary that the Bill should be circulated for eliciting opinion thereon. Sir, I move.

Mr President (The Honourable Sir Abdul Rahim): Motion Moved:

'That the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon.'

Mr Lalchand Navalrai (Sind: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I shall support this motion with a few words. Sir, this is a social legislation and should not pass through this House without full and free opinion from the Hindu Public. It has been the declared policy, I should think, of the Government of India that Bills of this nature, social bills, cannot be supported by the Government unless there is a majority opinion of the Hindus in favour of it. With that view, we have now known the feature of Dr Deshmukh's Bill. Therefore, we should not be in a hurry, and this Bill must go before the general Hindu Public. (Interruption) So I think we should wait till all the opinions come.

Sir, we have seen that there is some sympathy for inheritance by daughters, but the country has still to consider and the public opinion has to be obtained, whether the daughter, according to the Hindu Law, the commentators, and the case law, should get this kind of inheritance or not. Mr Honourable friend, the Mover of this Bill, has referred to the text which has to be consulted. In Bengal, in Bombay, in Madras there are different schools of Hindu Law and they should be consulted. Then one thing which has also to be considered during circulation by the public is this, whether the married daughter should have inheritance or not, because, if she goes into another family and she does get her inheritance to property there, the question before the public would be to consider whether she should have this double inheritance both from the parental house and from her husband's house. I shall not take further time of the House for the movement. I support this amendment for circulation.

J.A. Thorne (Home Member): Sir, I shall not attempt to say anything on the merits of the Bill—for the very good reason that the subject of succession to property amongst Hindus is one which is completely beyond my understanding. But the experience of this House during the last two years has convinced me that it is also a subject which Hindus themselves should not attempt to touch without a good deal of circumspection. May I remind Honourable Members that Dr Deshmukh's Bill, which was introduced in 1935, was passed in 1937 after circulation and consideration in the Select Committee and elaborate discussion. Yet, even so, the Act was found to be very imperfect, and almost immediately it was necessary to introduce Bill to make it workable. That amending Bill was passed in April 1938, less than a year and a half ago. How that law is working I do not know, and I very much doubt whether anyone can say: I should have thought it would take some years before anyone could say, how a law which was recently enacted was affecting the community which it touches. But it does seem to me that for the Legislature to attempt yet another amendment is liable to introduce bewilderment, or perhaps to increase bewilderment and confusion—and succession, I should also think, is a subject upon which one particularly needs stability and certainty as to the law. For these reasons the Government view is that it would be improper for this Bill to be considered by the House at this stage or for it to go to a Select Committee. I may say that there is another reason, and that is, that the subject of succession occurs in the concurrent legislative list and, in the view of the Government of India, it is ordinarily essential that where legislation is introduced here on a subject occurring in the concurrent list, the Provincial Governments should have a due opportunity to consider it. The motion for circulation gives that opportunity, and the Government are prepared to accept it.

Mr President (Abdur Rahim): The question is: 'That the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon.'

The motion was adopted.

140. The Khaksar Movement: Rafi Ahmad Kidwai to Haig, 2 November 1939

Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NMML.

Dear Sir Harry Haig,

I am much disturbed by the situation as it has developed during the last few days with regard to the Khaksars in the UP. It seems that the resignations submitted on Monday last by the UP Ministry have had a very unsettling effect on district authorities.

In Lucknow on the 30th instant the Khaksars were allowed to march in procession. On enquiry the District Magistrate informed the Chief Secretary that the prohibitory orders had expired the day previous. The District Magistrate did not take the trouble of asking for instructions from the

Govt as to the future course of action and I understand that my orders of first instant have not been communicated to him. Similarly the orders passed by me on the 28th instant have been held up.

You were pleased to pass an order yesterday proroguing the Assembly. No such order was communicated to the Hon'ble Speaker of the Assembly and he adjourned the Assembly *sine die*. This is no doubt a matter within Your Excellency's discretion; but on being asked H.M.G. pointed that propagation before the acceptance of the resignations would give rise to speculations and did not appear to be necessary. The Assembly has, however, been prorogued and no reason has been assigned and there is public speculation about it and we are unable to give an adequate answer to questions put to us regarding this matter. There are various other matters in which the orders have been withheld.

My colleagues and I have carefully considered the question and I feel that our position and authority are being jeopardized and questioned. In these circumstances I would beg you to relieve us as soon as possible.

I might remind Your Excellency that on the 28th instant when we were asked to continue after 30th when we were to tender our resignations, I had made it plain that we can continue to function for a few days more only on the understanding that our orders shall be carried out as they should be. I may further add that even if we had not tendered our resignations on constitutional issue, we should have resigned if any of our orders had been withheld.

Yours sincerely,

141. On the Resignation of Congress Ministries

'Islam Stands for Freedom', *Hindu*, 3 November 1939.

2 November 1939

'Muslims are lovers of freedom. Islam preaches Independence and, when the hour comes, Muslims will not be found wanting,' observed Dr K.A. Hamied,¹ member, Bombay Council. He congratulated the Bombay Ministry on displaying a high sense of duty in tendering resignations at this critical juncture. 'The resignations,' he said, 'are a matter of great pride to India. The Congress has demonstrated to Parliament and to the world outside that India is a self-respecting nation. The Congress has vindicated India's dignity and honour. How can India participate in a fight for the freedom of Poland and Czechoslovakia when Indians are denied freedom to manage their own affairs? India cannot but protest against the rejection by Parliament of her just claims put forward by the Congress. If India had been a free country, she could pledge her support to Britain. In the fight for the preservation of democracy in the world, unlike America and other nations that are remaining neutral and are witnessing helplessly the destruction of humanity, a free India would champion the cause of democracy. It would be against her tradition even to remain neutral. Only a free India could fight for the freedom of other nations.'

Referring to the minorities' problem, Mr Hamied stressed that it was a purely internal question. 'We will settle it as soon as we are masters of our own house. It is not a big problem. It will disappear as soon as the right to frame our own constitution is granted to us,' he declared.

Dr Hamied severely criticized the attitude of the Muslim League. It was absurd, he said, to say that democracy was unsuited to the genius of India. Such a statement was against Islam. It was wrong to say that the Muslim League was the only organization representing Indian Muslims. 'The Muslim League,' he continued, 'is a vocal section. There are large numbers of Muslims who do not owe allegiance to the League. The *ulama*, the religious heads of the community, who wield large influence among Muslims, are among the severest critics of the League. They are not supporting the League. Thousands of Muslims have joined the Congress. The Muslim League

represents only a small fraction of the community. Simply because the League is vocal, it does not mean that it represents the views of the entire community.'

¹ Dr Khwaja Abdul Hamied (1898–1972); educated at Allahabad University (BA, 1920); Berlin (MA, PhD); at the call of Mahatma Gandhi gave up studies and joined the Non-cooperation Movement; leader of Non-cooperation movement among Allahabad University students; expelled from College; when Gandhi, along with the Ali brothers, came to Aligarh and founded the National Muslim University (later shifted to Delhi and renamed Jamia Millia), he joined it as Reader in Chemistry; in 1924 after the suspension of the Non-cooperation Movement, left for Europe and joined Berlin University, where he obtained his doctorate in 1927; stayed for several years in Europe for the study of pharmaceutical, chemical and allied industries; settled in Bombay in 1931; Managing Director and Technical Expert of the Chemical, Industrial and Pharmaceutical Laboratories Ltd., briefly known as 'Cipla'.

142. Muslims and the Congress

'Muslim Conference Resolutions', *Tribune*, 8 November 1939.

Lahore
7 November 1939

At an emergent meeting of the Azad Muslim Conference¹ held yesterday the following resolutions were passed:

(1) M.A. Jinnah attaches the greatest importance to the recognition of the Muslim League as the sole representative body of the Muslims of India, although the truth is that the number of the Muslim members of the Congress is far greater than the total membership of the Muslim League. Again there are other organizations like the Jamiyat al-ulama and Majlis-i Ahrar which are equally popular and powerful and work hand in hand with the Congress.

'In spite of the above fact if the mere question of the recognition of the Muslim League is the only hitch in the way of national unity then the national Muslims have no intention to stand in the way of being so recognized, provided Jinnah and his associates are prepared to fight the battle of India's freedom shoulder to shoulder with their non-Muslim brethren.

(2) In the opinion of the meeting the statement of Lord Zetland that Indian National Congress represents only the Hindu community is a mischievous attempt on the part of the Secretary of State for India to drive a wedge between the different communities particularly at a psychological moment when pourparlers between the Congress and the Muslim League were in progress and the prospects of success had become bright. The Committee further believes that the Congress is the only national and political organization which represents all the communities and its gates are open without any distinction of caste and creed to any one who chooses to enter its portals'.

¹ In March 1940 there gathered at Delhi representatives of the various Muslim nationalist parties and groups—the Congress Muslims, Ahrars, Jamiyat al-ulama, Shia Political Conference, and so on; virtually all Muslim groups except the Muslim League and the Khaksars. Allah Bakhsh, Premier of Sind, presided at this 'Azad Muslim Conference'. The delegates representing at that time probably the great majority of India's Muslims, came to protest against the Pakistan idea, and against the use made of the Muslims by the British government and others as an excuse for political inaction. They strongly supported the Congress's plan for an Indian Constituent Assembly, elected by full adult suffrage, to draw up a constitution for India; the Muslim delegates to that assembly to be elected communally, and to have the power to devise safeguards for Muslim culture, personal law, political rights, and economic position—this devising to be without interference from any other community or the British. The Conference set up an executive 'to preach communal amity and to devise means for a permanent solution of the communal problem'. Further, it resolved: 'India, with its geographical and political boundaries is an indivisible whole... All nooks and corners of the country contain the hearths and homes of the Muslims, and the cherished historic monuments of their religion and culture, which are dearer to them than their lives.... This Conference unreservedly and strongly repudiates the baseless charge levelled against Indian Muslims by the agents of British Imperialism and others that they are an obstacle in the path of Indian freedom and emphatically

declares that the Muslims are fully alive to their responsibility and consider it inconsistent with their tradition and derogatory to their honour to lag behind others in the struggle for the country's independence.'

143. Congress Membership in Maharashtra

AICC Papers, File No. G-54, 1939, NMML.

14 November 1939

<i>District</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Total</i>
Poona	9952	11827	21779
Satara	864	11850	12714
East Khandesh	5335	6938	12273
Nasik	2905	8185	11090
West Khandesh	1343	9376	10719
Thana	2461	7586	10047
Ahamadnagar	1485	8113	9598
Sholapur	5156	3974	9130
Bombay sub.	855	7676	8531
Ratnagiri	1642	4775	6416
Kolaba	—	2318	2318
	31,997	82,618	1,14,615

Congress Membership of the States in Maharashtra

<i>State</i>	<i>Figure of membership</i>
Savantwadi	627
Sangali	618
Miraj	501
Kirloskar Wadi	347
Ichalkaranji	74
Sudhagad	50
Atpadi	9
	2226

<i>British Territory</i>	<i>States</i>	<i>Total</i>
1,14,615	2226	1,16,841

Congress membership in Maharashtra in the year 1938

<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Total</i>
39,267	1,09,277	1,48,544

Secretary
(G.A. Deshpande)
Maharashtra PCC
Bapu

144. The Congressman

Harijan, 11 November 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 70, pp. 321–23.

On the Train to Delhi
31 October 1939

The Congressman seems to have become a distinct species. The various groups who make up the Congress organization have one thing in common. They are nationalists to the core. They will die for India's independence as they are living for it. They have made nationalism part of their religion, whether they are Hindus, Muslims, Christians or any other.

Now the Congress contains, besides those who need no other label but that of being Congressmen, socialists, communists, kisan sabhaites, trade unionists, Congress nationalist, Royists, ex-terrorists, the so-called Gandhites, etc. I have not intentionally omitted any group. Some of these have sub-divisions. The Forward Bloc is an amalgam. Its other name is leftists. As the Congress movement spreads, it may throw up other groups. But all of them have one thing in common: a burning passion for freedom and readiness to die for it.

It is true that the vast majority of Congressmen are Hindus. But they stand apart from other Hindus as we have found in the South during the campaign for temple-entry. The sanatanists, who I think and hope are a handful have fought the reformers who are mostly Congressmen, and have denounced the latter as traitors to their religion. The Hindu Mahasabha is becoming a protest against the Congress. Some of its members use about the Congress language calculated to create contempt for it. They regard Hindus who belong to the Congress as almost outcastes.

That the Congressman stands for complete independence, for bold social reform for broad tolerance, has a brilliant record for suffering and sacrifice, is a matter for legitimate satisfaction. The formation of different groups in a mass organization like the Congress is inevitable and may be a distinct sign of progress and life. But if it is so, why are there communal quarrels, why do the Mahasabhites distrust Congress Hindus, why do not men and women belonging to tall faiths flock to the Congress banner, and, last but not least, is it all well with the groups themselves which I have mentioned?

Let us examine their condition. Are they centripetal or centrifugal? Do they strengthen the organization or do they weaken it? Are they not bidding for power? Do they not distrust one another? Do they submit to discipline?

I am not able to give a flattering answer to all these questions. I am afraid that these group contain in themselves the seeds of the decay of the Congress. The cause that accounts for weakness within Congress ranks is also the cause that accounts for the Congress failure to draw all communities to its ranks.

That cause is absence of a living faith in non-violence in thought, word and deed.

Now, therefore, is the time for every one of us to test the efficacy or otherwise of non-violence. A false step by the Congress at this stage of its career is bound to retard the country's progress towards its goal. Strange as it may appear to Congressmen, I make bold to suggest that the one way to disarm communal suspicion is not to offer civil disobedience in terms of Swaraj. The prospect that is about to face the country is that of the British Government in alliance with the so-called minorities arrayed against the Congress single-handed. Civil disobedience against this combination is a contradiction in terms. It would not even be civil war. It would be criminal war.

If Congressmen, whether labelled or unlabelled, do not subscribe to non-violence as I have been developing it in these columns, and do not appreciate the instructions issued by Rajendra Babu and the advice I have tendered in *Harijan*, they should signify in writing their discontent to Rajendra Babu and tell him what they would like him to do and, if he cannot comply with their

wishes, what they would themselves do. It must be clear to every Congressman that this is no time for divided counsels, indecision, or half-hearted obedience to instructions. For decisive action the whole Congress has to move forward in confidence and with one mind.

145. Bengal Provincial Congress Committee:
To the General Secretary, AICC
AICC Papers, File No. P-5/1939-40, NMML.

*8, Santi Ghose Street
Calcutta
18 November 1939*

Dear Sir,

We beg to state the following facts and request you to kindly place them before the members of the Working Committee for their consideration and necessary action.

The Executive Committee of the BPCC at its meeting held on the 30th October, 1939 had appointed a sub-committee for framing the rules for guidance of the Election Tribunals of the Province. It would appear from the statement of the Secretary and the trend of the discussions at the said meeting that the majority group of the BPCC were not satisfied with the personnel of the Provincial Election Tribunal nor with the working of the same which had then begun to function. The Rules framed by the sub-committee have been recently published. Even a cursory look at it will convince an impartial reader of the dishonest attempt of the majority group of the Executive Committee of the BPCC to reduce the Tribunal as subordinate body of the Executive Committee. The judiciary, instead of being made independent and a separate body, is sought to be made a perpetual underling of the Executive. The rules, though prefaced to be not inconsistent with the rules framed by the AICC, are really not in keeping with the spirit of those rules and resolutions that have been passed from time to time by the Congress. With the gradual working of the Tribunal, precedents would have naturally and surely grown up and in the meantime there is no specific complaint on the part of the aggrieved parties that the Tribunal transgressed any rules of justice and equity. The grievance of the majority group of the Executive Committee of the BPCC was more in respect of the procedure adopted by the Tribunal in deciding the disputes. The procedure is meant for speedy disposal of the disputes, and the procedure as envisaged in the afore-said rules will result only in unnecessary delay as was the customary practice before the appointment of the Tribunal.

Secondly, the Executive Committee of the BPCC at the said meeting authorized Shri Subhas Chandra Bose to nominate Congress nominees in the ensuing Calcutta Corporation Election and to run the said election on behalf of the BPCC. Apart from the principle involved in it whether a banned member can be authorized to assume the executive function of an elected Congress body, there is another great principle which is going to be sacrificed by such action. The Congress Committee, both the District and Ward Congress Committees of the Metropolis have always stood for their primary right to nominate the Congress candidates and to run the election on behalf of the Congress. It would be a great injustice to deny them such right and privileges under normal conditions and to allow the growth of any totalitarian institution in place of democratic organization.

Yours faithfully,
[Fourteen Signatories from
Calcutta Congress]

[Enclosure]

Bengal Congress Election Tribunal Rules as amended on 20.11.1939

Following are the Rules for the formation and the conduct of business of the Provincial and District Tribunal in Bengal.

Short Title and Commencement

1. These Rules may be cited as the 'Tribunal Rules', and shall come into force retrospectively from the time when the Bengal Provincial Tribunal has been appointed.

Appointment of Provincial Election Tribunal

2. (a) The Executive of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee shall unanimously or by a majority of at least three-fourths of its members, appoint yearly a Provincial Election Tribunal, no member of which shall stand as a candidate for election as a delegate or to any office or membership of an elective Congress Committee in Bengal and Surma Valley, during the term of his office.

(b) if the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee fails to appoint the provincial Election Tribunal by a date specified by the Working Committee of the All India Congress Committee, the Working Committee shall appoint one.

Appointment of District Tribunal

3. The Provincial Election Tribunal shall appoint one or more persons to constitute a District Tribunal in each district provided that no person so appointed shall be a candidate for election during his term of office. If for any reasons, a district Tribunal is not appointed in respect of any district, the Provincial Tribunal shall record in writing their reasons therefor and cause the fact of such non-appointment to be published in at least two daily newspapers and thereafter the Provincial Election Tribunal shall exercise all the functions of the District Tribunal in respect of that particular district only.

Power and Duties of Provincial Election Tribunal

4. (I) The Provincial Election Tribunal

(i) Shall on its own finding or on report by a District found any one guilty of misconduct in connection with enrolment of members, election or lodging of a false objection or complaint knowing it to be so, shall be disqualified from standing as a candidate for election, or be expelled from the Congress for such period as it may consider just and proper:

(ii) Shall hear appeals prepared against any order passed by the District Tribunal within seven days of the passing of such order, and

(iii) Shall receive and decide disputes relating to enrolment of members and election of delegates and office bearers and members of elective committee of a district in respect of which there is no district Tribunal appointed.

(II) The decision of the Provincial Election Tribunal shall be final in respect of matters within the scope of the Tribunal provided that an appeal shall lie to the Working Committee against an order passed under Council. 4I(i).

Powers and Duties of District Tribunal

5. Every district Tribunal

- (i) Shall receive and decide disputes relating to enrolment of members, preparation or maintenance of register of members and election of delegates and office-bearers and members of elective committees: (ref: Art. XI, Cl.B)
- (ii) Shall receive objections in writing, containing the reasons for challenging an entry or omission in the Register of members, on or before the 30th September each year, and will, after hearing the objection and any other party concerned direct any name to be entered into or omitted from the Registrar as the case may be, on or before the 10th October every year:
- (iii) Shall forward a copy of its order directing any amendment in the Register to the District Congress Committee concerned as well as to the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.
- (iv) Shall receive all kinds of complaints about an election within the district lodged within seven days of the declaration of the result of any election and decide about the same, and
- (v) May report to the Provincial Election Tribunal recommending that any person found guilty of misconduct in connection with enrolment of members, maintenances of register of members, election or lodging of a false objection or complaint, knowing it to be so, shall be disqualified from standing as a candidate for election or be expelled from the Congress for such period as it may consider just and proper.

Procedure on Appeal

(Outside AICC Constitution. Relying mainly on laws re. Constitution of Tribunal and not inconsistent with AICC Rules)

6. Every appellant shall lodge before the Provincial Tribunal his petition of appeal in triplicate which shall contain a concise statement of the facts, of the grounds of appeal and of the arguments and authorities upon which he proposes to rely at the hearing; and the Tribunal shall thereupon send copies of the petition to the parties affected and to the Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the District Congress Committee concerned, if necessary, intimating the date of hearing. The Tribunal shall also give the appellant notice of the date of hearing.

Withdrawal of Appeal

7. An appellant may withdraw his appeal at any time by a petition in writing.

8. (a) Any respondent may after the due service of the notice of appeal file in triplicate on or before the date appointed for hearing, a concise statement of facts and of the arguments and authorities upon which he proposes to rely at the hearing. The Provincial Tribunal shall supply the appellant with a copy of any statement filed by the respondents.

Reply to the Respondent

(b) The Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee or of the District Congress Committee may either personally or through any person authorized by him appear in an appeal, if he so desires or is called upon by the Tribunal.

Hearing of Appeal

9. On the date fixed for the hearing of appeals or on such date or dates to which the hearing is adjourned the provincial Tribunal shall give sufficient opportunity to all parties and if necessary to the BPCC or to the DCC to present their respective cases before it and after hearing them the Tribunal shall pass such orders as it may think just and proper and serve the same on the parties concerned.

Procedure in Original Cases before District and Provincial Tribunals

10. (a) Every original case shall be instituted by presenting of a petition containing:

- (i) the names of the petitioners and of the opposite parties;
- (ii) the facts constituting the cause of action and when it arose;
- (iii) the declaration of relief the petition claims:

(b) Where the petitioner relies on any document in his possession or power, he shall file a copy of the same along with the petition:

(c) When a petition has been duly filed a notice shall be issued to the opposite party or parties and to the Secretary of the Congress Committee concerned and to the Secretary BPCC, intimating the date of hearing. The notice shall be served by post under certificate of posting.

(d) Within a week from the service of such notice the opposite party and the Secretary of the Congress Committee concerned as well as the Secretary of the BPCC may appear and file a written statement. It shall not be sufficient for an opposite party in his written statement to deny generally the fact alleged by the petitioner but he shall deal specifically with such allegations of fact of which he does not admit the truth. If the opposite party relies on any document in his possession or power he must file a copy of it along with his written statement.

(e) After the filing of the written statement, the Tribunal shall frame issues and fix a date for hearing;

(f) On the date fixed all parties shall be ready with the witnesses for examination before the Tribunals. After the examination of the witnesses the Tribunal shall hear arguments of both sides. The Secretary of the District of the BPCC will be entitled to make a statement if necessary either personally or by agent.

(g) After the case has been heard, the Tribunal shall pronounce its decision either at once or on some future day, of which due notice shall be given to the parties.

(h) The parties and the Secretary of the Congress committee concerned as well as the Secretary of the BPCC may either appear in person or through authorised agents.

11. If after the due service of notice upon the opposite party or upon the respondent, they do not appear the Tribunal concerned may proceed ex-parte and shall base its decisions on the evidence produced before it.

Review and Revision

12. The Secretary of the BPCC or any party to the proceeding aggrieved by any order may, at any time on a discovery of new materials, apply for revision or review of any order.

146. 'The Only Way': Gandhi on Constituent Assembly

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 362–65.

19 November 1939

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has compelled me to study, among other things, the implications of a Constituent Assembly. When he first introduced it in the Congress resolutions, I reconciled myself to it because of my belief in his superior knowledge of the technicalities of democracy. But I was not free from skepticism. Hard facts have, however, made me a convert and, for that reason perhaps, more enthusiastic than Jawaharlal Nehru himself. For I seem to see in it a remedy, which Jawaharlal may not, for our communal and other distempers, besides being a vehicle for mass political and other education.

The more criticism I see of the scheme, the more enamoured I become of it. It will be the surest index to the popular feeling. It will bring out the best and the worst in us. Illiteracy does not worry me. I would plump for unadulterated adult franchise for both men and women, that is, I would put them all on the register of voters. It is open to them not to exercise it if they do not wish to. I would give separate vote to the Muslims; but, without giving separate vote, I would, though reluctantly, give reservation, if required, to every real minority according to its numerical strength.

Thus the Constituent Assembly provides the easiest method of arriving at a just solution of the communal problem. Today we are unable to say with mathematical precision who represents whom. Though the Congress is admittedly the oldest representative organization on the widest scale, it is open to political and semi-political organizations to question, as they do question, its overwhelmingly representative character. The Muslim League is undoubtedly the largest organization representing Muslims, but several Muslim bodies—by no means all insignificant—deny its claim to represent them. But the Constituent Assembly will represent all communities in their exact proportion. Except it, there is no other way of doing full justice to rival claims. Without, there can be no finality to communal and other claims.

Again, the Constituent Assembly alone can produce a constitution indigenous to the country and truly and fully representing the will of the people. Undoubtedly such a constitution will not be ideal, but it will be real, however imperfect it may be in the estimation of the theorists or legal luminaries. Self-government to be self-government has merely to reflect the will of the people who are to govern themselves. If they are not prepared for it, they will make a hash of it. I can conceive the possibility of a people fitting themselves for right government through a series of wrong experiments, but I cannot conceive a people governing themselves rightly through a government imposed from without, even as the fabled jackdaw could not walk like a peacock with feathers borrowed from his elegant companion. A diseased person has a prospect of getting well by personal effort. He cannot borrow health from others.

The risks of the experiment are admitted. There is likely to be impersonation. Unscrupulous persons will mislead the illiterate masses into voting for wrong men and women. These risks have to be run, if we are to evolve something true and big. The Constituent Assembly, if it comes into being—as I hope it will—as a result of an honourable settlement between us and the British people, the combined wit of the best men of the two nations will produce an Assembly that will reflect fairly truly the best mind of India. Therefore the success of the experiment at the present stage of India's history depends upon the intention of the British statesmen to part with power without engaging India in a deadly unorganized rebellion. For I know that India has become impatient. I am painfully conscious of the fact that India is not yet ready for non-violent civil disobedience on a mass scale. If, therefore, I cannot persuade the Congress to await the time when non-violent action is possible, I have no desire to live to see a dog-fight between the two communities. I know for certain that if I cannot discover a method of non-violent action or inaction to the satisfaction of the Congress and there is no communal adjustment, nothing on earth can prevent an outbreak of violence resulting for the time being in anarchy and red ruin. I hold that it is the duty of all communities and Englishmen to prevent such a catastrophe.

The only way out is a Constituent Assembly. I have given my own opinion on it, but I am not tied down to the details. When I was nearly through with this article, I got the following wire from Syed Abdulla Brelvi:

Considerable misapprehensions among minorities (about) Constituent Assembly. Strongly urge clarification details, franchise, composition, methods arriving decision.

I think I have said sufficient in the foregoing to answer Syed Saheb's question. By minorities he has Muslims principally in mind as represented by the Muslim League. If once the proposition

that all communities desire a charter of independence framed by a Constituent Assembly and that they will not be satisfied with anything else is accepted, the settling of details surely becomes easy. Any other method must lead to an imposed constitution mostly undemocratic. It would mean an indefinite prolongation of imperialistic rule sustained by the help of those who will not accept the fully democratic method of a Constituent Assembly.

The principal hindrance is undoubtedly the British Government. If they can summon a Round Table Conference as they propose to do after the war, they can surely summon a Constituent Assembly subject to safeguards to the satisfaction of minorities. The expression 'satisfaction of minorities' may be regarded as vague. It can be defined beforehand by agreement. The question thus resolves itself into whether the British Government desire to part with power and open a new chapter in their own history. I have already shown that the question of the Princes is a red herring across the path. European interests are absolutely safe so long as they are not in conflict with 'the interests of India'. I think this expression finds place in the Irwin-Gandhi Pact.

Look at the question from any standpoint you like, it will be found that the way to democratic swaraj lies only through a properly constituted Assembly, call it by whatever name you like. All resources must, therefore, be exhausted to reach the Constituent Assembly before direct action is thought of. A stage may be reached when direct action may become the necessary prelude to the Constituent Assembly. That stage is not yet.

147. Working Committee Meeting

Leader, 22 November 1939.

Allahabad

22 November 1939

The Congress Working Committee had a three-hour sitting this morning during which, it is understood, routine matters were discussed. The Bengal Congress election disputes engaged the attention of the committee practically the whole morning. Mahatma Gandhi did not attend the meeting as he was observing his weekly silence.

The committee reassembles at 2 p.m. when it will continue discussion on routine office matters. Resumption of further discussion on the present political situation and the crisis will take place only tomorrow when, it is expected that Mahatma Gandhi will fully disclose his mind to his colleagues and explain to them what he meant when he said in the last issue of *Harijan* that civil disobedience need not necessarily be the next step forward. The members are all intrigued as to what Mahatma Gandhi means. There is, therefore, a feeling of expectancy on the part of Congress leaders assembled here who anticipate that when the committee meets tomorrow he will present a resolution containing his new technique and a new lead but none is certain about this.

Meanwhile there is a talk in the Congress circles that in view of the serious situation the Congress Working Committee may appoint Mahatma Gandhi as the 'sole dictator and plenipotentiary' of the Congress as was done in 1931 just before the second Round Table Conference. Enquiries in authoritative Congress circles have not so far elicited any confirmation of this talk although it is freely pointed out that Mahatma Gandhi has always been the sole plenipotentiary of the Congress.

Considerable interest has been created in the Congress circles and other political circles by Rajagopalachari's Madras speech wherein he has clarified what the Congress demand regarding a Constituent Assembly means, how that Constituent Assembly is to be called, what its powers will be and what it will be called upon to do and what the position of the minorities will be in such a Constituent Assembly.

148. Gandhi's Discussion with UPPCC Executive Council Members,
23 November 1939

Harijan, 2 December 1939 and the *CWMG*, Vol. 71, pp. 374–77.

Allahabad
23 November 1939

Question: You seem to be placing an exaggerated emphasis on non-violence today. Surely you will not suggest that we were more ready or more non-violent in 1920–21 and in 1930? Or will you say that your standard has now gone up?

Answer: Both. There was not then so much violence as is to be seen on the surface today. And my standard too has gone up. I was not so rigid in my conditions then as I am now. If you accept my generalship, you have to accept not only my conditions but my judgment as to whether we are ready or not. It is quite likely that there is really no difference between the conditions of those days and of today; but it is equally true that I did not know then that I was walking on a mine, today I am haunted by that consciousness and I cannot help it.

Question: Is there not a fear that, if we do not strike the nail while it is hot, we may never be able to do so at all? There is that psychology of readiness among the people. If we do not seize the opportunity, their enthusiasm may be damped and their readiness may vanish. The best thing, therefore, today is for you to suggest a programme whereby we may prepare the field and yet keep up the spirit of the people.

Answer: I have always been impatient of this kind of language. I cannot understand a readiness which would vanish if it was not availed of at once. That is no readiness at all. Ready is he who is ready at all times and at all places—whenever and wherever he is called. The only meaning of readiness is readiness to carry out the command of the general. To use military language, we should be so prepared as to make war unnecessary. What is essential is the attainment of independence, not the time and the ways and means of civil disobedience. I expect from you enough faith and discipline to instinctively await and obey your general's word. Don't expect me to say anything more. Do not expect me to reveal how, if ever, I shall launch civil disobedience. I have nothing up my sleeve, and I will have no knowledge until the last moment. I am not made that way. I knew nothing of the Salt March until practically the moment it was decided upon. This I know that God has rarely made me repeat history and He may not do so this time. There is one thing, however, I may, for reasons you may not reveal to me, be unfit as a general. In that case you must give me up, and I shall not in the least be sorry for it.

Now for the last point in your question. You want a programme which may be directly connected with civil disobedience. If you will not laugh at me, I will unhesitatingly say it is the programme of universal spinning. Listening to the alarms and advice of the doctors I have given it up for some time. I began it in response to Narandas Gandhi's call, and I do not think I shall ever give it up, until of course my hands are paralysed. So I would say that the more you spin the better soldiers you will be. If that is my conviction, why should I be ashamed of declaring it? There cannot be two parts in my advice, one of which you may accept and the other you may reject. My condition is a vital one. It is likely that there may not be the necessary intellectual conviction, but it will follow faith as a necessary consequence. I say this because I have acted in that spirit. I have marched miles upon miles, through bush and briar and along unbeaten tracks, acting on the word of command, during the Zulu Rebellion.

But as I have said the whole thing may strike you as chimerical or quixotic. In that case you have but to give up my leadership. I have led for twenty years, and it may be well for me to rest on

my oars. It is possible that you may be able to evolve some new technique of satyagraha. In that case the moment I am convinced I shall be ready to follow you. Whatever you do, do not accept my leadership with a mental reservation. You will by doing so betray both me and the country. If I get your cooperation, it must be full and hearty. I have argued the thing for twenty years; I can advance no fresh argument now.

Question: We have proceeded on an altogether different ideology.

Answer: Well; there's the rub. That is why I am repeating again and again my suggestion of a change in the leadership.

Question: But if the charkha is with some of us a symbol of your leadership and nothing more?

Answer: No, it must be a symbol of non-violence and a specific condition of preparation for a non-violent struggle. I would suggest even a better course—a course I suggested in 1934. Banish spinning and khadi from the Congress programme, so that I automatically drop out. If you do so, the mistake will not be yours but mine. For it is my duty to convince you that there is a vital connection between the charkha and non-violence.

Question: What was the duty of the Congressmen when there was a riot going on?

Answer: To die in quelling it. We had one Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi in 1931, and have had none to copy his example since. So many die during the riots, but they do not offer of themselves willing sacrifices. Those who do not accept this programme should leave me.

Question: But must we allow them to hold up the movement assuming that there will be Hindu-Muslim riots?

Answer: They cannot indefinitely do so. I have enough faith in Mussalmans to hope that they would rebel against being an obstacle in the way of independence. There is enough love of freedom and democracy in them to make them ashamed of that state of things.

Question: In view of the little time at our disposal, could you tell us what you would regard as the minimum preparation necessary from the point of view of spinning?

Answer: Why little time? Is it essential that we should start the movement in three months or six months? Let it take six years. What is essential is the preparation. I would ask you to get rid of impatience. The test for me is not a formal spinning by you all for half an hour or even an hour a day in order to satisfy me or to secure my leadership, but the universalization of spinning so that there may be no mill-cloth—indigenous or foreign—in your province. If I feel that we have made rapid strides in that direction, I shall be satisfied. You boast of several hundred thousand Congress members. If all of these took up the programme and became voluntary workers on behalf of the AISA, there would be no mill-cloth in the province. It should be part of your daily life. Just as an Afridi cannot do without his rifle, even so every one of you non-violent soldiers should not be able to do without your spinning. And all this, not because this old man wants it, but because you want independence. When you realize this, you will not come to me with questions like the one you have asked.

149. Nationalist Muslim Activity

'Nationalist Muslims in India', *Hindu*, 25 November 1939.

24 November 1939

Nationalist Muslims are taking steps to convene an all India conference representing Nationalist Muslim opinion in the country at an early date. Yesterday, about two hundred Muslims of Delhi held a preliminary meeting and resolved to form a provincial Reception Committee for the purpose.

Maulana Nuruddin Bihari,¹ Convener, Nationalist Muslims Conference, in the course of a press statement, said:

‘The Congress must make a public declaration that in India there are only two parties, namely, those who stand for the country’s freedom and are prepared to make every sacrifice for it and those who are against it and who put every possible obstacle in our way, and further that the future constitution of India should have nothing to do with religion, as religion will already be safe under it. The basis of the new constitution must be economic, and if this declaration is made, then all communal bodies will disappear and if it is further declared that in the framing of the constitution, only those people shall count who are fighters in the cause of freedom, then communalists will never come forward to put obstacles in our way.

‘Fortunately I am not alone in holding these ideas. I am sure that the majority of the free-thinking Muslims think alike. I want to say it openly that the free-thinking Muslims will not permit the Congress to compromise with any minority and particularly with the Muslim minority, because we do not want that the follies of 1916 should be repeated. The Congress High Command should know that the AICC has permitted it only to settle terms with the Government and not with any minority.’

The Maulana appealed to Muslims to unite and gather in a conference at Delhi and declare to the world that Islam cannot tolerate slavery, and that Muslims are out to win freedom, irrespective of the question whether Hindus help us or not.

¹ Maulana Nuruddin Bihari was a leading figure in the Jamiyat al-ulama-i-Hind and in the nationalist campaigns. He went to jail during the non-co-operation and the civil disobedience movements.

150. Bengal Provincial Congress Committee

AICC Papers, File No. P-5, 1939–40, NMML.

Subhas Chandra Bose, President.

J.C. Gupta, Treasurer.

Ashrafuddin Ahmad Choudhury, Secretary.

To General Secretary, AICC

*99, Premchand Boral Street
(Off College Street)
Calcutta 25-11-1939.*

Dear Friend,

I am sending herewith a copy of the resolution adopted unanimously at the Conference of the Presidents and Secretaries of all districts of Bengal for your perusal and for placing it before the next Working Committee meeting.

Yours sincerely,
Kali Pada Bagchi
Asst. Secretary,
Bengal Provincial CC

The following is the resolution adopted at the Conference of the Presidents and Secretaries of the different districts within the province of Bengal & Surma Valley on November 23, 1939:

‘The Conference of the Presidents and Secretaries of the various District Congress Committees of Bengal is definitely of opinion that the conditions for a national struggle for self determination are existent in the country and that a bold lead in that direction should be given immediately by the Congress Working Committee. When the British Government have been so thoroughly exposed by their own declarations, any hesitation or vacillation in the matter will create a stalemate in our national progress. The resolutions on war at Haripura and other sessions have clearly indicated the will of the people and the Congress should act up to them forthwith. The response of the British Government to the Working Committee’s resolution is too unambiguous to warrant any further delay. The communal problem also should not serve as an argument for the postponement of the struggle. While endeavours should be made to improve Hindu-Muslim relations, we should remember that though a section of the Muslims may be loyalist, most of them are definitely anti-Imperialists, and, are more likely to help the Congress when it launches a struggle.

The Conference is of opinion that a struggle will not only serve the national cause but further the cause of internal unity as well, and thereby weld the Indian people into one solid phalanx. The Conference, therefore, requests the Working Committee to launch immediately a nation-wide struggle and thereby maintain the fighting tradition of the Congress. In case the Working Committee is not in a position to start the movement on an all-India scale immediately, this Conference asks the BPCC to request the Working Committee to permit the BPCC to launch a struggle on a provincial basis in order to combat the encroachment on civil liberties in Bengal by the recent ordinances and also to make good its resolution promising an effective movement for the release of Bengal Political Prisoners.’

151. Let the Congress Decide

Editorial, *Independent India*, 26 November 1939.

26 November 1939

We have all along warned against the tendency of befogging the mind of the average Congressman with all sorts of apparently laudable considerations with the purpose of relegating the main issue of the capture of political power to the background. We have also exposed the process of the destruction of democracy inside the Congress and the desire to set up a system of moral violence on the pretext of making out of every Congressman what no human being can possibly be—absolutely non-violent in word, deed and thought. At least, we have been borne out by no less an authority than Gandhi himself.

In his reply to the letter of our editor he categorically affirms that the threadbare ‘constructive programme’, together with the impossible demand that every Congressman should be absolutely non-violent in thought, word and deed, should not only be given predominance in the Congress plan of activity, but that the political independence could be visualized only as the automatic consequence of the fulfillment of the so-called constructive programme and the attainment of the utopian moral ideal. Gandhi also declares that the Congress should be subordinated to a dictatorship claiming absolute obedience not only in deed, but also in thought and word.

We have pointed out time and again that discipline, as conceived by the Congress leaders, rules out democracy. We have also exposed that their conception of democracy is hardly to be distinguished from authoritarianism. The obedience due to the Congress Dictator, according to Gandhi, goes to the extent of abolishing not only the freedom of speech, but even of thought. With the freedom of thought the freedom of conscience also necessarily goes. What happens then to the morality of the Congress politics?

Lately, Gandhi has been expressing misgivings about the internal affairs of the Congress, and has been laying down rules for the conduct of every Congressman. He has also been insisting upon strict discipline necessary for the unity of the organization. Searching the causes of indiscipline and disunity, he recently expressed suspicion about the motive of the different groups of Congressmen who dare to hold dissenting views and advocate alternative policies. A letter was addressed to him on our behalf with the object of removing his suspicion as far as we are concerned. It is published in this issue. In addition to stating the well-known views of the League of Radical Congressmen, the letter drew Gandhi's attention to the cause of the present deplorable state of affairs inside the Congress, which has been causing him misgivings. While the letter dealt mainly with fundamental issues, current political problems could not be left out, because the present deadlock in Congress politics is the logical consequence of the confusion of issues, and of the tendency we have all along exposed fearlessly, namely the tendency of side-screen of moral sermons and bombastic phrases.

The controversy has not been initiated by us. Gandhi suspected our loyalty to the Congress. Our reply was given in self-defence. It was a straightforward answer to a number of rather insinuating questions. It was also an appeal to Gandhi to look for the causes of the evils where they are to be really found. He replies our appeal with impatience and anger. He practically orders us out of the Congress.

We shall not be so easily provoked. We do not regard the Congress as the private property of any particular group however sincere or devoted it may be. We do not believe that the Congress is the creation of any single individual and, therefore, should always conform with his ideas. The Congress is the creation of the Indian masses, objectively involved in a struggle against foreign Imperialism and native reaction. We have been participating in that struggle for a much longer time than many of the present leaders of the Congress. We have also suffered and sacrificed though we have not received, nor have we hankered for, so much publicity. Therefore, so long as the Congress remains the organ of the struggle for the freedom of the Indian masses, we belong to it. But we refuse to submit ourselves to any self-constituted dictatorship. Internal democracy is the life-breath of an organization fighting for freedom and democracy. We shall not allow the life of the Congress to be stifled in an atmosphere of moral coercion and non-violent dictatorship. That was the burden of our letter which has angered Gandhi. But the truth must be told. We have said it and we must stand by it. The issues are joined. They must be fought out. The last word belongs not to any self-constituted dictator, but to the rank and file of the Congress.

We have always pointed out the contradiction between the political programme of the Congress and what has come to be known as its creed—its so called sheet-anchor. We have showed the contradiction to be so grave as to necessitate the rejection of one or the other. We have maintained that the growing tendency to attach greater importance to the creed implied the repudiation of the political programme. Gandhi's reply makes it clear that is the position. We are not prepared to take it for granted. The Congress must be given an opportunity to discuss the issue thoroughly and express its verdict. If the verdict be in favour of Gandhi's position, then the Congress will cease to be an organ for the struggle of the political freedom and social emancipation of the Indian masses. Consequently, it may no longer be worthwhile for us to defend it against the evil of authoritarianism and the danger of reformism. But until that is clear, we must fight the battle to the last ditch.

We have criticized the introduction of the so-called creed from two points of view. In the first place, it limits the scope of the struggle for the attainment of the declared goal of complete independence. While pointing that out, we always insisted that the issue is not violence versus non-violence. Rejection of the cult of non-violence does not necessary commit the moment to violence. It is a matter of perspective. Moreover, the point we insisted upon was that for a political

organization the programme should be purely political, free from all other considerations. And we categorically reject the point of view that politics by itself is not moral. If freedom is not a moral ideal, then morality is an empty word, which may be used only for the purpose of suppressing freedom, collective as well as individual.

The second reason of our opposing the so-called creed of the Congress is that it has never been adopted by the Congress as a whole. For that reason, it cannot be binding for Congressmen. It is an undeniably democratic principle that members of an organization always have the right to demand and agitate for the revision even of its previous decisions. The right to oppose the imposition of an uncritical acceptance of certain ideals, and subordination to the corresponding rules of conduct, in the absence of a previous resolution of the organization, is still greater. In criticizing the creed and opposing its dictatorial enforcement we have done nothing more than exercise an indisputable democratic right.

Today Gandhi demands not only absolute non-violence in thought, word and deed; there must be an equally absolute obedience to a dictatorship which claims to be moral. But even he cannot alter the fact that his proposition to amend the Congress constitution in that sense was rejected by a Plenary Session of the Congress. So long as that fact remains the creed, whatever may be its intrinsic merit, is not binding on Congressmen. It is not permissible to test the loyalty of Congressmen by that standard. Yet, on the strength of his dictatorship he demands implicit obedience as regards the acceptance of the creed. Before he can lay that claim, the matter must be submitted to a Plenary Session of the Congress or to a referendum of the entire membership.

Then, we protest against the dictatorship itself, set up on the pretext of a 'war' which does not exist, and will most probably never take place, if the dictatorship is non-violent, a real 'war' will never take place. That being the case, there is absolutely no reason to abolish formally the internal democracy of the Congress, already destroyed in practice, on the pretext of an imaginary 'war time'. Implicit obedience in a period of decisive action may be a tolerable proposition. But to be absolutely obedient in inaction will be to commit suicide, politically as well as spiritually. Congressmen should have the right to do so or not.

Intelligent people cannot be impressed by the epigramme 'Inaction is often the most effective action'. As a matter of fact inaction is death. The present policy of the Congress is killing its political life. The policy logically follows from the 'fundamental morals and vital social reforms', to which, according to Gandhi, 'the Congress hooked its politics deliberately' ever since 1920. That is our contention. We demand that the Congress should break away from those moorings which rigidly circumscribes its radius of activity. A decision must be made in the light of twenty years' experience. The proper authority to do so is Congress as a whole. If in 1920 it was permissible for the Congress to open up a new chapter in its history, who would deny it the same right to open up still another new chapter in 1940? We maintain that, unless it does so, it will be demoralized and disintegrate. Let the Congress as a whole choose its future course. Why should the dictators hound out of the Congress all those who try to defend the democratic right of the membership?

Since Gandhi's reply, instead of bearing out our contention that there is a clash of fundamental issues, tries to confuse the situation by laying greater importance on the difference regarding the resignation of Congress Ministries, a few words in that connection should be said. Even in this connection he makes a confession which gives his whole case away. He admits that his close associates and most trusted lieutenants, composing the Congress Working Committee, have not 'as simulated non-violence with all the implications suggested by me'. It is not the first time that he makes this significant admission. As a matter of fact on several occasions, he had admitted that he himself has not come up to the ideal standard. How could, then, he insist upon perfection on the part of the millions of ordinary men and women who constitute the Congress? If it takes a man

like him more than a whole life's time to come up to the standard, it cannot be expected that the Congress as a whole, or even a sufficient number of individual Congressmen, will even fulfill the condition which he lays down as necessary for initiating a struggle for freedom.

The strange conception of the morality of putting the cart before the horse is killing the Congress politically. The resignation of the Ministries cannot have any other significance than an empty gesture, made for saving face. Therefore, we could not approve of it. Even before the step was taken, we said that no useful purpose would be served by the resignation of the Congress Ministries except as a prelude to a mass struggle. Since Gandhi was so categorically of the opinion that the country was not prepared for such a struggle, he could not consistently advise the resignation of Congress Ministries. His justification in no way answers our contention.

Gandhi's arguments in this connection only reveal that the decision to accept office was based on false premises. Today, he argues that 'when they (Ministers) failed to advance independence they were bound to forego every other advantage, however great in itself'. But during all this time in office, the Ministers have been working exactly on the contrary principle. It was maintained that every little advantage gained through ministries was harmful for the struggle for freedom. With that specious plea, all political activities on the part of Congressmen were forbidden. If in this crisis, the Ministries stood naked in their weakness, the responsibility for that should be shouldered by the leadership of the Congress. And now to shirk the responsibility of defending civil liberty on the pretext of that weakness, is as good as to maintain that two wrongs make one right. The resignation of the Congress Ministries, before making a determined effort to utilize their position for preventing the complete destruction of civil liberty on the pretext of a war situation, is an act of sheer desertion. It does not enhance the prestige of the Congress. It reveals weakness.

Gandhi argues that it 'would have been to court ignominy if the Congress Ministries had remained in office after they had 'been ignored about the war'. Why then did they not resign earlier? Besides, that was not the only occasion on which Congress Ministries were ignored. But the fact is, as Gandhi himself reveals, that, even after they were so ignored, the Congress Ministries continued in office because the Working Committee wanted the British Government to rectify the mistake of 'the grievous omission' and thus 'retain India's co-operation in the prosecution of the War'. Nothing could be more ignominious than to take up that attitude of capitulation, though veiled in words of dignity and power. As soon as the British Government found that the Congress was eager to avoid a struggle, it took advantage of the weakness and refused to make any responsive gesture. Thus out-manoeuvred by its own eagerness to avoid a struggle, the Working Committee was forced to make an ineffective gesture, hoping at least to save its face. That is the implication of the resignation of Congress Ministers and no *post factum* justification can make it appear otherwise.

Finally, one more point must be belaboured so that there may not be any misunderstanding. We advocate neither violence nor immorality when we maintain that all considerations on these scores are irrelevant for the political programme of the Congress. We demand a radical change of the present Congress policy, not because it is non-violent and moral, but because it is ineffective and bankrupt. Its ineptitude and bankruptcy stand out today more crassly than ever before. Hence the necessity for a new leadership, which means a radical change of policy, not necessarily of the personnel, confronts the Congress. It must face the issue if it wants to live and triumph as the leader of the Indian people's struggle for freedom. Let the Congress decide.



152. All India Congress Committee

AICC Papers, File No.05-28/P-1, 1939-40, NMML.

27 November 1939

Circular No. 23

P-1/2414.

To

All Provincial Congress Committees

Dear friend,

I am sending you herewith the resolution on the present political situation passed by the last meeting of the Working Committee held at Allahabad.

You will find that the operative part of the resolution lays stress upon the constructive programme which alone can prepare the country for a movement of Civil resistance. Success of the constructive programme is the measure of our preparedness for the fight for freedom, which has got to be waged in accordance with the traditional policy of the Congress. You will find that the Working Committee have again laid stress on the necessity of spinning by Congressmen and the effective substitution of all mill cloth, foreign or Indian, by Khadi.

The resolution rightly emphasizes the great need at the present juncture of internal peace and good will between the different communities and classes of our people. Hindu Muslim Unity is the symbol of this larger and more comprehensive unity. Experience has taught us that this unity can best be achieved by constant service of members of one community to the members of the other community in neighbourly love. The responsibility of the major communities in this respect is great.

Untouchability is a standing blot in our national life. Those who want justice to be done to them must render it in the same measure to those who are suffering from injustice at their hands. This will also prove to the world that ours is a moral struggle.

The resolution also lays stress upon the calling of the Constituent Assembly, not only for the purpose of framing of our constitution by the most democratic device, that is, the will of the people of India, but as powerful solvent of the vexed question of communal unity. In this connection I would invite the attention of your committee to an article in the latest issue of '*Harijan*'.

Our War aims, the constructive programme and the idea of the Constituent Assembly must be popularized through out the length and breadth of the country. All this is not civil disobedience but a necessary preparation for the coming struggle. A soldier has got to be ever ready. But he can fight only when the word of command is given. Therefore, Congressmen and Congress women should keep the strictest vigilance over their words and actions lest they fire the fateful shot before the word is given by the generalissimo. Every hasty action, instead of bringing the struggle nearer, will only postpone, and those who are eager to join the just fight should show the utmost restraint and discipline during this period of waiting.

You will please keep this office informed about the progress of the work entrusted to Congressmen and Congress Committees by this resolution. You will let us have an idea of the machinery that you propose creating for this purpose.

Yours sincerely,
General Secretary.



153. Gandhi–Birla Conversation: G.D. Birla to Laithwaite,
29 November 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2317, NAI.

*Birla House
Albuquerque Road
New Delhi
29 November 1939*

My dear Mr Laithwaite,

Herewith I am sending the file which contains the note of my conversation with Gandhiji. I would not say that it contains an exact photograph of his mind. A photograph would contain correct lines of the details whereas this picture is drawn from memory and I may have overemphasized some lines, while underemphasizing the others.

The paragraphs have been written from day to day. Some were written before he went to Allahabad and others after his return from there. I have deliberately not re-arranged them because then it would not give the correct picture of the way in which his mind was moving from day to day. The advantage of not re-arranging is that you can go into the spirit of the talk. If it reads a little rambling, that, of course, is my own fault because it is my own language. Please return the file after His Excellency has gone through it.

I will be here for another four or five days and if after you talk with him and after he has gone through this note, His Excellency has gone through it.

I will be here for another four or five days and if after you talk with him and after he has gone through this note, and His Excellency feels that a word with me would be helpful, I will be at his disposal.

Yours sincerely
G.D. Birla

[Enclosure]

1. Bapu agrees to the proposed Constituent Assembly being based on present electorate with its communal and special representation to reflect exactly the present composition of the Provincial Assemblies. Perhaps, the proposed Federal Assembly minus its States' representatives could be converted into a Constituent Assembly.

He does not mind His Majesty's Government's representatives being included in the Assembly but obviously they have to be without vote. In any case, their number being very small, they could easily be outvoted and so the vote will have little value. In ordinary affairs simple majority rule would prevail but for the harmonious working of the constitution, it is not the majority rule but the largest measure of agreement that will count. And in this agreement at least in practice not only Muslims but His Majesty's Government will have to be included. Undiluted majority rule thus in practice is nullified.

I am told that the constitution of South Africa was framed by a Constituent Assembly and so there is a good precedent.

2. Bapu is prepared to meet His Majesty's Government on the question of British troops and discriminatory safeguards etc. He says in our own interest we would not ask for any withdrawal of British troops. The British army at present according to him is serving three purposes: (1) External security (2) Internal security (3) Security of the Britishers. He thinks that so far as external security is concerned, once we are independent, we should be trusted to defend the country. Therefore,

that purpose is eliminated. As far as the security of Britishers is concerned, once we and Great Britain become friends, there is nothing for the Englishman to fear. But British troops may still be required for the purpose of internal security. Hindus may demand their stay and Muslims too may demand it. He says that he knows that the circumstances would not allow any substantial withdrawal of British troops from India in the near future. We know what we can digest and since we know our limitations, we should be trusted to demand only as much as we can digest.

When I asked him what if some one made unreasonable demand, he replied that when a Constituent Assembly would be elected on the widest possible franchise, there would be enough men with responsibility to know why all unreasonable demands should be eschewed in the best interest of India. He did not fear any such possibility.

3. He does not see any difference in substance between the word Dominion Status and Independence but he would prefer a different word other than the word Dominion Status. South Africa is called the Union of South Africa and Ireland is called the Free State of Ireland. Some similar name may have to be selected for India and not the Dominion Status, although it is recognized that Ireland too has got a constitution of Dominion Status.

4. He would welcome Federation with modifications as demanded by him in his formula to Lord Lothian (this is attached) if it is established on the background of the declaration that he wants.

5. In the course of general conversation it clearly appeared that there is substantial common ground between him and the viceroy. But there is distinct difference between the languages of the two. I am sure Bapu accepted office in provinces not because the viceroy changed his language but because Bapu was convinced of his sincerity. In this case too I feel that although there is a good deal of ground on which there is an agreement, he is still unconvinced that Great Britain has made up its mind to strike a permanent friendship. Over-emphasis on the communal aspect by His Majesty's Government has frightened him. He wants to test the intention of Great Britain through the declaration. Once that declaration is made, on details he will be found to be most accommodating. He thinks unless Great Britain undergoes that mental revolution, she would not help India like a friend, and he does not want to find himself always in a position to have to struggle every time for the next step. He wants to be assured that the cash credit for the full amount has been promised in his favour on which he can draw according to his needs. He realizes that he does not need to draw the full amount today and in fact is not going to draw it.

6. Bapu is extremely anxious to avoid civil disobedience. In fact, he is working hard for this and wants to have a frank talk with the United Provinces workers when he goes there.

7. Bapu says he would be satisfied in Indian States with good and responsive governments. But his complaint is that even that state of affairs does not exist at present in most of the States.

8. Bapu says that in the Constituent Assembly Princes should be represented by the Paramount Power. I, however, feel that a good alternative could be discovered to tackle the problem of princes.

9. Defining the word 'independence', he said: 'I only tell Englishmen, you stay here but stay with our goodwill as our friends. Trust us as you would an Englishman'. Don't they trust the people of Australia, Canada and South Africa? Why should they not trust us? The moment they begin to trust us, we become independent. This is the independence of my conception. Jawaharlal's independence is different. But Englishmen don't appreciate my definition. Yet when I talk of independence, it is of my brand that I talk of. With such mentality and with the background of non-violence what could the Constituent Assembly demand except what I have visualized?

10. Whatever phraseology I may use, it means the thing that I have said. The viceroy perhaps thinks that I am a visionary. He does not see my mind clearly. Why should Englishman distrust us if we are non-violent? Our non-violence could be either of the brave or of the coward. If it is of the

brave, then nobody could be a better friend of Englishmen than ourselves. If it is a non-violence of the coward, then they need not fear us. In both cases fear should not exist. With all this background they should realize why we should not insist on the removal of the British troops. If we are non-violent as brave, then we neutralize the presence of the British troops. If we are non-violent as cowards, then we would need them for our own protection. In both cases, removal becomes unnecessary at present.

11. He says that on every point (such points to be settled beforehand) where the Constituent Assembly and His Majesty's Government disagree, the question could go to the arbitration composed of statesmen of the Empire. Great Britain can have nothing therefore to object to the Constituent Assembly.

12. I again emphasized the danger of Constituent Assembly opening the whole question *de novo*. I pointed out the danger of going out of the orbit of the 1935 Act. Muslims who are just now satisfied with one-third of representation may feel encouraged to ask for more and *vice-versa*. The result would be disastrous. Bapu thinks, however, that there is nothing to fear. He does not object to the existing Communal Award. But he thinks circumstances would lead to its elimination only to be replaced by more nationalistic scheme. He expects that the Constituent Assembly will create a better communal spirit and he thinks that my fear that going out of the orbit of 1935 Act would be extremely disastrous is baseless....

13. He was extremely agitated over his forthcoming visit to Allahabad and was inordinately brooding over it. He said, 'if I can convince my own men and make them thoroughly non-violent in thought, word and action, then I can get you freedom within six months. I will settle with Jinnah. If, however, I fail to settle, I will declare a *status quo*. Let the British rule continue, I would say. Englishmen and Muslims both will then see our honesty and it would create a confidence in the minds of both Englishmen and the Muslims. And, will anyone including Englishmen after they are assured of our honesty, tolerate a *status quo*?'

14. I told Bapu that, in spite of his different approach in substance he was so much nearer to the viceroy that if he decided that a settlement must be made, he could without much difficulty produce a formula. He agreed but said the time had not come for that. The viceroy was not yet ready with a scheme so it was no use producing a formula. I replied that the viceroy might perhaps not be ready with something and might ask Bapu to suggest some constructive idea. Bapu said: Let him say this. I am ready.

15. Bapu's Constituent Assembly is not a counterpart of the historical Constituent Assemblies. It is of his own conception. Perhaps, Jawahar's too is different. What is visualized is that a specific term of reference will be given to the Constituent Assembly. Some points, British troops and European interests, etc. will by negotiation be excluded from its sphere. Some arrangement on these will have been arrived at with His Majesty's Government before the Constituent Assembly meets. For some points provision will be made for arbitration. Some will have to be decided by majority. But the general rule on all-important points would be the largest measure of agreement.

16. Bapu says that the Indian States could have a *status quo* if no agreement to their satisfaction is possible. In this case new constitution functions only for British India. Paramount Power may guarantee protection to the States under the Treaty rights. But I am hoping that the Constituent Assembly could successfully negotiate with the Princes if there is reality in the atmosphere.

17. Bapu says the Muslim question could successfully be settled only through the Constituent Assembly. And success depends only on His Majesty's Government taking a just view. Obviously, we cannot have a final settlement with the Muslim League, however representative it may be. It will be dangerous to do so. The agreement may be renounced any day by the Muslims and so there could be no finality. If we are to make new settlement, it should be done with the whole

community. Constituent Assembly, therefore, is essential because the Muslim representatives in it will be duly elected men. But success can only be possible if His Majesty's Government realize that subject to all safeguards of the minorities and other problems, the political question has to be settled only with the Congress. Even in the formula given to Lord Lothian by Bapu, this question was emphasized. And it is natural also. Congress is the only political body. Other bodies are all communal bodies. Their opinion must carry weight but only on religious and communal matters. On political matters opinion of body which fights for freedom is more important than the opinion of a body which may say (although the Muslim League does not say so) 'no freedom'.

18. Bapu says if His Majesty's Government really want a settlement they should tell the Muslims: 'We have decided to free India. But we do not want to sell your interests. We are prepared to give you all the protection that you need. We cannot favour you. We can only be just. We cannot convert the majority into minority. If you want any undue weightage, you can get this only from the Hindus and not from us. From us you should expect only protection for your culture, religion and other interests. We guarantee full protection and will help you if there is any injustice. But we cannot support your 50-50 claim. If you want 50-50 or any big concession, you must go to the Hindus. But you must settle with them. If they refuse you your just dues, we will stand by you. If you make any unreasonable demand, we cannot support you.' Unless His Majesty's Government takes up this attitude, obviously, there could be no settlement.

19. The present attitude of His Majesty's Government cannot at all help the situation because Muslims think that they can put any unreasonable demand at the threat of checking the progress. And they feel that in this attitude of theirs, however unreasonable, His Majesty's Government is at their back.

20. Bapu says His Excellency has unconsciously complicated the communal position which was already perplexing. The Muslims had made complaints against the Congress Governments. We have instructed all our Ministers to invite the interference of the Governors on any communal matter where our Ministers may unconsciously be not doing full justice to the Muslims. The Governors in some cases reply that we were not only acting impartially but were showing a distinct partiality in some cases in favour of the Muslims. We then challenged Jinnah to place the matter in the hands of the Chief Justice for investigation. He preferred to get the enquiry made by His excellency. We are agreeable even to that but we have not so far been told by His Excellency as to where we have erred and whether the Muslim grievances are without foundation. The Governors are our best witnesses and His Excellency should now tell the Muslims frankly that if he too feels satisfied that they have no cause for any complaint. On the other hand, if there is substance in the complaint, then we must be told so. But by suggesting the need for provincial agreement, it is made to believe that His Excellency wants a coalition government in the Provinces and it is made to appear to the world as if there is truth behind the complaints of the Muslims. In fairness to us, His Excellency must give impartial verdict about our administration.

21. I pointed out to Bapu that it appears as if certain factors were being ignored by the Congress. The Princes may be the creation of Paramount Power but they are independent at least for evil if not for good. The Muslim problem was the greatest factor and European interests could not be ignored. And last but not the least was factor of our weak power of assimilation. Any settlement that is made with His Majesty's Government must be with the realization of all these factors. He realizes this. But he says that he has already suggested how these factors could be tackled successfully.

22. I asked him whether he thought Jawaharlal would succeed in conversation with Jinnah. He says he might, provided the viceroy took up the correct attitude which he has already suggested.

23. I asked Bapu if he was hopeful about a settlement. He said: Yes, certainly. I asked him whether he was impatient. He said: No.

24. I asked him what should now be the next step. Should the viceroy send for him? Or should I prepare the preliminary ground for him? He said that I should continue to interpret his mind to the viceroy. His Excellency wanted him, he would certainly go but he felt the viceroy could not invite him just now because he (the viceroy) had no plan. As soon as he has one he would certainly invite. He must be furiously considering ever the next step. The viceroy has his own difficulties and Bapu quite appreciates them and so he has no impatience. I told him however that it would be a mistake to unduly delay the things. There are forces in the country which could not be checked for very long. Bapu agreed. I asked him if he himself was thinking of asking for an interview. He said 'no' and added that his relation with the viceroy was such that he would not feel the slightest hesitation in asking for an interview if he saw the need for it. But the time has not yet come. I told him that I did not like the possibility of his asking an interview because my experience was that whenever he took the initiative to seek an interview, it was always for some quarrel! He smiled but agreed and added: This is so because when I go, I do so if I only feel strong.

25. I pointed out to him that the resolution of the Working Committee passed at Allahabad in my opinion tastes like a bitter pudding. There were two outlooks mixed up together. I did not like the reference to France nor did I like that we should pretend that we were not bargaining. Besides, how could we say that the Muslims also wanted freedom? He said I was correct but only partially. He himself did not like some of its portions but I was not quite correct in suggesting that we were bargaining. ... But the viceroy did not think as I did. It would be bargaining or still worse if we asked a price for our co-operation in the war. We simply demanded that since the house was on fire we would make efforts to secure freedom. The Englishman, if he were wise, would not resent this attitude but would welcome it.

I pointed out to him, however, that previous statement could not be reconciled with the present position. He said it could be in this way that his original statement suggesting unconditional co-operation had done its work. It had created a background. Without that background the present attitude of the Congress might have created much bitterness in the country. There would have been violence, and thought it might have been suppressed by the Government but before that was done, thousands of persons would have been dead. He had saved the situation by creating an atmosphere. He wanted to avoid the struggle unto the end and hoped it would be avoided.

I told him that it was marvellous how in spite of impatience people had obeyed his order and responded to his call to keep calm and quiet. He said: yes, it was a good display of discipline.

26. Bapu is happy and also unhappy about his achievement at Allahabad. He had expected a fight with the Left-Wingers but they easily gave in and accepted his instructions. He is not prepared to distrust them but he did not like their yielding so easily. Jawaharlal, of course, is helping him as far as discipline is concerned.

154. The Fighting Female

Leader, 29 November 1939.

29 November 1939

The demand of the Gujarat Woman's Conference, which met last week at Ahmedabad, for the representation of women in the proposed Constituent Assembly which is expected to frame India's constitution, will have, if it is not properly dealt with, serious consequences, which the Congress Working Committee can not do worse than ignore.

The man's a fool who tries by force or skill
To stem the current of a woman's will;

For if she will she will, you may depend on't,
And if she won't she won't, and there's an end on't.

It is considered a mistake to prophesy in matters political, but like some others we too sometimes have a glimpse of the inner light which illuminates the path that lies before us. And this is what we see just now regarding the part which women will play in the Constituent Assembly. We assume that women are as anxious as men to free India from the British yoke. But they will say that while they condemn British imperialism, they are convinced that peace and freedom can only be established and preserved by the application of the principle of self-determination to them so as to eliminate a masculine control. The present Constituent Assembly, they will argue, is not the proper body to draft a suitable constitution which will put an end to the domination of men; it is no better than the Round Table Conference which was convened by the British Government in London. A Constituent Assembly of women is the only democratic method of ensuring the freedom of their sex. So also it should not be difficult to visualize the results which will ensue if the negotiations between the spokesman of the masculine group and the feminine leader break down. The women will launch a civil disobedience movement. We do not believe in the efficacy of Mahatma Gandhi's weapon of satyagraha. But civil disobedience by women is different. You can send to prison a man who manufactures illicit salt. But no court of law can compel a woman to feed, clothe and bring up her children properly and to carry out her other domestic duties upon which the happiness of family life, and consequently of the nation, depends. A Congress volunteer who brought into hatred the Government established by law in the country could be prosecuted and punished. But a woman can with impunity poison the mind of her children against the master of the house. One of the most powerful weapons in the armoury of Congressmen has been invective. Let them use this weapon against women and watch the result. Bindle used to have a raspy tongue. But when he heard his bitter half use her tongue he confided to his friend Ginger, 'I'd like to meet the cove who started talking about the happy home life of old England. I'd like to introduce him to Mrs Bindle.'

There is another circumstance which should be taken notice of. The failure of the negotiations between the Congress leaders and the Viceroy was followed by the publication of the correspondence which passed between them. The leaders were very anxious that those letters should be published. These now constitute an important part of Indian political literature. No newspaper article, no public speech is complete which does not make a reference to them. Imagine all that men have said or written to members of the fair sex being published in newspapers. And as for obvious reasons no reporters are present when men unburden their hearts to women, and as everything is fair in war, there is every danger of very distorted versions of those talks being published. Remember in that celebrated suit for a breach of promise which has been immortalized by Dickens. Mr Pickwick had made known to his landlady merely his liking for chops and tomato sauce. And yet what use was made of that innocent letter by Mr Pickwick's traducers! We think therefore that we are on unassailable ground when we say that women can wield the weapon of civil disobedience far more effectively than men. And one may be sure that the next session of the Congress Working Committee where the situation created by the demand of the Gujarat Women's Conference is likely to be discussed, will not be less momentous than the one recently held in Allahabad.



155. Baffling Situation

Harijan, 2 December 1939 and *CWMG*, Vol. 71, pp. 388–390.*Segaon*
2 December

Jawaharlal, born democrat as he is, had arranged for a free talk between the Executive Council of the UPPCC and me. We had three such talks. I had expected that the talks would result in a parting of the ways. Among the Congressmen whom I was facing there were some who had laughed at the charkha and non-violence. But to my utter astonishment I found them reconciled to both. It is a baffling situation both for Congressmen and me.

I do not know whether I am wise in bearing the heavy responsibility of leading Congressmen who only the other day had no faith in me. Are they not paying too great a price for my leadership in a battle? Can I lead them to success? If I was not good enough in peace, how can I be good in war? There was no peace. The Congress is at war with Great Britain till independence is won. War had never ceased; only civil disobedience had been suspended for better and greater preparation. Congressmen who did not obey instructions during the preparatory period were surely not fit soldiers on active duty. And yet I could not distrust the responsible men who faced me in Allahabad. What is true of them is true of the other Congressmen in the other provinces. And so I am shouldering the burden.

Let me then think aloud. I hope that Congressmen will make it a point to read *Harijan* as if it was a weekly bulletin containing instructions for them.

To the impatient Congressmen I say: I see no immediate prospect of declaring civil disobedience. There can be no civil disobedience for the sake of embarrassing Great Britain. It will come when it becomes clearly inevitable. Probably it will come by the goading of the official world. I do not doubt the honesty of the Viceroy or that of the Secretary of State. At the same time I have no doubt whatsoever that they are in error because they cannot get out of the old rut to which they are used. We must give them time to collect themselves. We must do real propaganda by way of educating the public both here and abroad. We can not all of a sudden dispel the surrounding misunderstandings, not merely on the part of the British people but of our own countrymen. There is no mistaking the fact that many non-Congress Muslims honestly think that the Congress Ministers did not pay enough heed to Muslim complaints. Congressmen wedded to non-violence have to give special heed to the complaints of non-Congress Muslims. It is no use saying that they are frivolous. But we have to be patient and courteous enough to take them seriously and endeavour to show clearly that they are frivolous. I do not wish to suggest that pains were not taken to deal with them. I am just now concerned with the phenomenon that the complaints persist. We must, therefore, give time to demonstrating that there never has been anything in the complaints. If in the course of further investigation we discover errors, we must make amends. We must prove to the Muslim countrymen and to the world that the Congress does not want independence at the sacrifice of a single legitimate interest, be it Muslim or other. We may leave no stone unturned to carry the minorities with us. This meticulous care for the rights of the least among us is the *sine qua non* of non-violence.

If it is true, as it is, that for the British Government to plead want of communal unity as a bar to independence is wrong, it is equally true that this discord is, nevertheless, a serious handicap in our march towards swaraj. If we had the Muslim League and others with us, our demand would become irresistible.

So much for the external difficulties. Not till we have given sufficient time to their solution, can we possibly think of civil disobedience.

The internal weakness is no less great. I see a vital connection between the charkha and non-violence. Even as certain minimum qualifications are indispensable in a soldier in arms, so are certain other and even opposite qualifications indispensable in a non-violent soldier, that is, a satyagrahi. One of these latter is adequate skill in spinning and its anterior process. A satyagrahi occupies himself in productive work. There is no easier and better productive work for millions than spinning. What is more, it has been an integral part of the non-violent programme since its commencement. Civilization based on non-violence must be different from that organised for violence. Let not Congressmen trifle with this fundamental fact. I repeat what I have said a thousand times that, if millions spun for swaraj and in the spirit of non-violence, there will probably be no necessity for civil disobedience. It will be a constructive effort such as the world has not witnessed before. It is the surest method of converting the 'enemy'.

The Working Committee desired to appoint me as its sole representative to carry on negotiations that may be necessary, and to conduct the campaign of civil disobedience if they failed. It was a burden I could not carry. Being boxed up in Segaoon, I have no direct touch with the people. I have no confidence, I should have none, in my unaided judgment requiring an accurate first-hand knowledge of many facts. I could only act with the constant guidance and direction of the Working Committee. I shall carry on no negotiations to finality. I should be pleased if I was relieved of the burden. But I shall not shrink from any responsibility, so long as I carry the confidence and affection of the Working Committee and Congressmen in general and so long as I feel that I have the requisite qualifications.

156. Reactions to the Congress Resolution

Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of November 1939, Government of Madras, Public (General) Department.

Fort St George
2 December 1939

[Extract]

My dear Conran Smith,

Political—The resolution of the Working Committee not to launch a campaign of direct action at the present stage has been received with some relief in Congress circles and orthodox Congressmen are still for the most part content to wait on events.

There have been a few Congress meetings at which the position of the Congress *vis-à-vis* the Government was explained usually in unobjectionable terms. The speeches are generally unobjectionable but occasionally a speaker exceeds his brief and exhorts the audience not to help Britain in the war. One such was rebuked by a Congressman for going too far.

There has also been a very marked decrease in the number of anti-war speeches by Communists and Congress-Socialists, presumably as a result of the recent prosecutions. Only Malabar and North Arcot have shown any appreciable number of meetings, though it is reported from East Godavari that there has been some resumption of activity following the recent lull.



157. Constituent Assembly: 'The Only Solution'

*Leader, 3 December 1939.**Bombay
3 December 1939*

The need for toning up the Congress organization and the creation of a proper atmosphere to enable the Congress to be prepared for any eventuality was stressed by Mr C. Rajagopalachari, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Mr Bhulabhai Desai and Mr B.G. Kher who addressed a public meeting in Azad Maidan this evening on 'the next step'. Sardar Patel, explaining the implications of the Working Committee resolutions, declared that the committee could take only one decision and that decision had been taken, namely, preparation of the country for the final objective. The Sardar emphasized the need for strengthening the organization and cautioned against hurry and irresponsible criticism.

Mr Rajagopalachari in the course of his speech reaffirmed that a Constituent Assembly was the only solution for the present state of affairs. Britain was at present examining the question. While preparing the country for fight, if need be, it was important that all avenues be explored for a satisfactory settlement. In the meanwhile he appealed to Congressmen not to indulge in mutual accusations but clear the ground for proper leadership. Appealing for communal concord, he said if only the Muslim brothers thought without prejudice they could easily see that this land was not worth living in without self-government. Reiterating the demand for a Constituent Assembly, he added, 'even if a Constituent Assembly is not convened today it could be convened when Britain finished the war'. He hoped that Britain would part with power without the Congress resorting to direct action. Mr Rajagopalachari strongly repudiated the allegation that the minorities suffered under the Congress regime. Some argued that because the Congress had taken assurance that the Governors would not interfere in the day to day administration of the Ministries the former were helpless. 'I challenge the Viceroy or any Governor to say that at any time they found it necessary to raise objection or interfere with the Ministries in order to protect the minorities. It is not a question of assurance but of fact.'

158. Constituent Assembly

*Independent India, 3 December 1939.**3 December 1939*

The Constituent Assembly has these days come to occupy a very important place in the Congress politics. The last meeting of the Working Committee declared it to be 'the crux of the Congress programme for the future' and directed Congress organization and Congressmen to explain to the people the message and policy and implications of the Constituent Assembly. Gandhi himself has confessed to his conversion to the idea of a Constituent Assembly and has become more enthusiastic about it 'than Jawaharlal himself'. Taking their cue from Gandhi, all the Gandhian leaders of the Congress have suddenly developed deep love for the slogan and have started delivering long lectures about it. All this would have doubtless gladdened the hearts of those who have been advocating the slogan for over last ten years, but for the fact that in the course of this transition from downright opposition to its enthusiastic acceptance by the Congress leaders, the slogan has lost all its revolutionary implications.



159. Two Voices

Editorial, *Leader*, 4 December 1939.

4 December 1939

The resolution passed by the Working Committee of the Congress at Allahabad was so beautifully vague about the next step that the Congress might take, that it has utterly failed to give any clear lead to the Congressmen. Nehru has, however, spoken from the presidential chair of the Provincial Political Congress at Muttra as if the 'high command' of the Congress had practically made up its mind and a struggle between the Congress and the Government was imminent. If ever there was a compromise, declared Nehru, it would be on the lines mentioned by the Working Committee. 'A settlement is only possible if the Congress demand is accepted.' (Where is 'compromise' here?) He further thought it was not probable that Britain would accede to their demand. And so, logically, 'As things stand at present, I do not see any prospect of a settlement between the Congress and the British Government.' After referring to the non-cooperation movement of 18-19 years ago and the civil disobedience movements of 1930 and 1932, Nehru said that he 'felt that there was a cycle of 10 years, at the end of which movements took place in this country, for it was known that there was going to be another movement bigger and more glorious than any before'. So, if Nehru's speech be a correct index of the mind of the Congress 'high command', a great struggle between the Congress and the government does not appear to be very distant. And Nehru occupies such an important position in the Congress that he must be taken to be fully aware of how the mind of the Mahatma, who virtually means the Congress, is working.

But there are, too, some other Congress leaders who might be expected to be as well aware of the Mahatma's mind as Nehru. And one of them is Rajagopalachariar, who has always occupied a very high place in the counsels of Mahatma Gandhi. Quite recently, just before the meeting of the Working Committee at Allahabad, he too delivered a speech, at the Congress House, Madras, and judging from his speech the intentions of the Working Committee would appear to be rather different from what might be inferred from Nehru's speech. Here are a few significant extracts from the Madras ex-Premier's speech:

The Congress should do nothing in haste. The speaker's belief was that it would take at least three months for the termination of the deadlock.

He was sure that they (the new Government in Madras) would not unsettle the programme (the Congress Ministry's programme of prohibition and temple-entry).

The Congress demand was just and fair and the Congress Ministry had taken only a short holiday. We need not refer here to the controversy that this speech occasioned in Madras. It will suffice to state that if Rajagopalachariar's reading be correct, the resignation of the Congress ministries may turn out after all to be nothing more serious than a short holiday, during which their programmes will be carried on by the bureaucratic governments, and the deadlock which has arisen between the Congress and the Government may be amicably settled in a few months' time. We will not indulge in any speculation as which is more likely to prove a true prophet—Nehru or Rajagopalachariar. It is a domestic question for Congressmen who can draw their inferences, perhaps according to their predilections.

But there is in Nehru's speech one more point, to which we might refer. 'All Congressmen', he is reported to have said, 'were now firmly united. All differences had vanished.' He felt so much satisfied with this manifestation of unity that he went on to declare eloquently enough: 'It has often happened that in peace time we have differences. But in times of crises, we become a disciplined body of soldiers.' Nehru's remarks on this achievement of unity in Congress ranks might have led one to think that if ever there was such a thing as a Forward Bloc, it must have now

ceased to exist. But the Bloc continues to be as alive as ever and its leader’s remark on the Working Committee’s resolution—‘licking the feet that kick’—is an interesting commentary on the much trumpeted unity in the Congress ranks.

160. Congress Members Enrolled in Urban and Rural Areas

AICC Papers, File No. G-54, 1939, NMML.

5 December 1939

Tamil Nadu		
<i>Districts</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>
1. Madras	6,702	...
2. Chingleput	2,431	6,815
3. South Arcot	3,513	8,857
4. North Tanjore	5,044	8,364
5. South Tanjore	8,336	15,896
6. Trichy	3,649	10,520
7. Dindigul	4,813	7,321
8. Madurai	4,230	5,181
9. Ramnad	5,263	9,278
10. Karaikudi	2,436	15,260
11. Tinnevely	4,357	17,550
12. Coimbatore	8,072	17,550
13. Salem	1,455	10,600
14. North Arcot	2,610	10,531
	62,911	1,43,241
Rural area members	...	1,43,241
Urban area members	...	62,911
Total	...	2,06,152

Yours sincerely,
Manager.

161. Nationalist Muslims’ Conference

Editorial, *Tribune*, 6 December 1939.

6 December 1939

We need hardly say that we do not agree with the view of Mr S.A. Brelvi, even though it has the powerful support of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, that the holding of a Nationalist Muslims’ Conference at Delhi towards the end of this month, as proposed by Maulana Nuruddin Behari, is not only unnecessary but will lead to many misunderstandings. Our own view on the contrary, is that such a conference, always necessary and useful, was never more necessary and useful than now and would remove far graver misunderstandings than it can conceivable create. ‘Most Nationalist Muslims,’ says Mr Brelvi, ‘will disagree with Maulana Nuruddin Behari, who in his

statement says that they would not permit the Congress to compromise with any minority, and particularly with the Muslim minority, because they do not want that the follies of 1916 should be repeated.' Maulana Nuruddin Behari did not say that he was opposed to a communal settlement; we can think of no Nationalist, whether Muslim or Hindu, who is opposed to a settlement of the communal problem, undoubtedly the most important and urgent of India's domestic problems. What he did say was that he was opposed to a compromise like that of 1916, for which the country had paid and was still paying so heavy a price; and we should be truly sorry if 'most Nationalist Muslims' disagreed with his view in this matter. Such disagreement would, in our opinion, raise justifiable suspicion in the public mind as to the strength and ardour, if not the reality, of their nationalism.

'Whatever may have been the defects of the Congress-League Pact of 1916,' says Mr Brelvi, 'it certainly paved the way for the historic Muslim co-operation in the great non-co-operation movement of 1920-22'. Our own reading of both the Congress-League Pact and of the historic non-cooperation movement of 1920-22 is entirely different from that of Mr Brelvi. It was not the Congress-League Pact, but the Congress decision to make the Khilafat agitation one of the principal planks in its platform that paved the way for the co-operation of a good many Muslims, who had previously not been associated with the Congress in the great non-co-operation movement. The wisdom of the action of the Congress in taking a conspicuous part in the Khilafat agitation has been questioned in many quarters, but wise or otherwise it was that action, and not the Congress-League Pact of 1916 which had anything to do with the Muslim co-operation in the non-co-operation movement. The very fact that neither Mr Jinnah, then as now the supreme leader of the Muslim League, nor any of his principal associates participated in the non-co-operation movement shows this beyond the possibility of doubt.

As regards what the Maulana describes as the follies of the 1916 Pact we can think of no difference of opinion in any responsible Nationalist quarter today. It is a matter of history that pact was mainly responsible for the acceptance of the pernicious and wholly anti-national system of separate electorates by the authors of the Montague-Chelmsford Report who were otherwise strongly opposed to it. Nor can any one doubt that all the successive steps that have since been taken towards the progressive vivisection of the people of India are ultimately traceable to that fatal, though perfectly honest and well-meant, blunder. Within a few years, if not months, of the reconstitution of the Legislatures under the Montague Constitution, large parts of the country, no part more than our own, began to ring with passionate cries of 'communal representation from top to bottom,' and suggestions began to be put forward that there should be communal representation not only in every Government Service from the highest to the lowest, but in local bodies, in Universities and institutions affiliated to them, in learned and other professions, in short in every walk of life. The process has gone on uninterruptedly until we have reached a stage when so responsible a person as Mr Jinnah feels no hesitation in declaring publicly that India is not and never can be a nation, that it is a congeries of as many nations as there are principal religions in the country, and that consequently democracy in the western sense is wholly inapplicable to it. If all this does not effectively prove the folly of the Pact of 1916, undoubtedly the origin and fountain-source of the present communal trouble in the country, it is impossible to think of anything else that could prove it.

It must be said in fairness to the Nationalist Muslims that they were among the first to realize the folly, and from the national point of view, no less than from the point of view of the best interests of their own community, the grave danger of the system of separate electorates. No one can have forgotten the strong denunciation of this system by men like Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr Ansari. Nor can any one have forgotten the stirring speech made by Sir Ali Imam as President

of the first All India Nationalist Muslims' Conference which held its sittings at Lucknow some years ago. The position that was created by that Conference, the Conference that met shortly after at Faridpur and similar other gatherings of Nationalist Muslims, was so hope-inspiring that the public confidently believed that the days of separate electorates were numbered and that the time was near when the people of India would once again realize their essential oneness, close their ranks and march hand in hand towards their heaven-appointed destiny of complete national freedom. But this was not to be. It was exactly at that stage that something mysterious happened. All of a sudden under the operation of some inscrutable forces the voice of Muslim nationalism ceased to be heard and communalism once again became the dominant force in Muslim quarters. When the communal decision of His Majesty's Government, embodying the vicious principle of communal representation not merely for the Muslim community but for all classes and communities to whom it was in the power of the Government to give it, was announced there was no such thing as an organised protest from the Nationalist Muslims who had previously claimed to be in a majority in the Muslim community, with the result that not only the British Government but even the Congress took it for granted that the Muslim community as a whole were in favour of the decision. The very Muslim leaders who only a few months before had rent the welkin by their impassioned denunciation of separate electorates treated the decision as a settled fact which it was neither necessary nor right to try to unsettle, and with a few exceptions they raised no voice against it. No wonder that their attitude gave rise to grave misunderstandings and bitter complaints in non-Muslim quarters. It was actually said that one had only to scratch a Muslim Nationalist to find a Muslim Communalist. The criticism was unjust, as we now know, for during the last few months Muslim nationalism has once again asserted itself, but it was not unnatural in the circumstances of the case.

The reason why we deeply regret the advice given by Mr Brelvi to the organizers of the Nationalist Muslim Conference is that the acceptance of that advice by them would not only revive the old complaint and the old misunderstanding but do incalculable harm to the country by stiffening the attitude of the Muslim League and the Muslim communalists generally. 'The Nationalist Muslims,' says Mr Brelvi, 'are convinced, that it is not possible to win independence without Hindu-Muslim unity, the attainment of which is the biggest and most urgent task that faces the country today.' No one can share this conviction more fully than ourselves. But it is just because we share it fully that we are anxious that the Nationalist Muslims should not only meet to discuss the best way of arriving at Hindu-Muslim settlement, but should so organize their forces as effectively to remove from our midst the obstacles that stand in the way of such a settlement. It is strange that instead of asking them to concentrate on such effort Mr Brelvi should ask the Nationalist Muslims to take exactly the step that would strengthen the obstacles and prevent a Hindu-Muslim settlement. His hope that the forthcoming conversations between Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr Jinnah will lead to a Hindu-Muslim settlement, while it is a necessary sequel to his advice to the Nationalist Muslims to abandon the proposed Conference, can only show that he has learnt nothing from the failure of so many past conversations of this kind. The failure of those conversations may have been due to more causes than one, but the most important cause undoubtedly was the absence of any organised pressure on Mr Jinnah and the League from the Nationalist Muslims. As long as this pressure is absent Mr Jinnah, who is now a pure Communalist, will be able to represent himself as the leader of a united community of 80 millions, and as long as he is able to do so, there is not the smallest chance of either a Congress-League or a Hindu-Muslim settlement being reached.



162. Momins Disclaim Muslim League

Leader, 8 December 1939

Allahabad

6 December 1939

A deputation on behalf of the All-India Momin (Ansar) conference consisting of Mr Abdul Qayum Ahmed, assistant secretary of the All-India Momin Conference, Hakim Haziq Khan, general Secretary of the UP provincial branch of the Conference, and Mr Riazuddin Ahmed, the local president, waited on Mr Jawaharlal Nehru this morning in Anand Bhawan.

The deputation put before Mr Jawaharlal Nehru in detail the various representations which they had already sent to him about a month ago and also to Dr Rajendra Prasad, the Congress president.

The Momins allege that out of the nine crore Muslims of India nearly half of them are Momins and they have together with other poorer class Muslims been systematically exploited by the Muslim politicians—all of whom belong to the ‘Shareef’ class that is upper class and have demanded and obtained special privileges which they have proceeded to enjoy for themselves. The Momins disclaim the Muslim League as their representative. Their demands include representation in the services proportional to their strength and their representative ministers.

The Working Committee of the All-India Momin Conference held meeting here yesterday and it was decided that the next annual session of the Conference should be held at Gorakhpur on December 27 and 28. It is also being arranged to hold an industrial exhibition during the annual session which will display the handicraft of the Momin Ansars. It may be noted that a majority of the Momins lives by hand weaving and spinning.

A public meeting is being organised here for tomorrow evening on behalf of the local branch of the Conference.

163. Constituent Assembly: Mr Asaf Ali’s Observations

Leader, 9 December 1939.

Karachi

4 December 1939

A fervent appeal to Britain to grant Indian demand for Constituent Assembly as India should not be denied the right of freedom and free co-operation among nations, was made by Mr Asaf Ali, MLA (Central) in the course of reply to civic address presented to him by the Municipal Corporation. The address referred to the fact that Mr Asaf Ali had been elected to the Central Assembly by a joint electorate of Hindus and Muslims and prayed that the day would soon come when the two major communities and all other communities that inhabit this great country would live in mutual understanding and trust and return their elected representatives on legislative bodies on the system of joint electorates.

Mr Asaf Ali, replying to the address at the outset paid a tribute to the cleanliness of the city and referred to the question of joint electorate. He said though he was a strong advocate of joint electorate he was not prepared to coerce anyone into accepting the principle and would rather leave it to the good sense of the electorate to decide the question.

Referring to the question of Constituent Assembly, which ‘is the topic of the day’, Mr Asaf Ali pointed out the precedence of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland where, he held, constituent assemblies were convened to draft their own constitution, and wondered why the

same principle should not be applied to India. He argued if the civilized powers of the world were united in resisting powerful countries and wanted to re-establish the principle of freedom and free cooperation among various nations of the world, surely India which was nearly as big as the whole of Europe, excluding Russia, should not be denied the right of freedom and co-operation. Dealing with the constitution of the body, he said the very first thing which we had to do was to settle a complete and exhaustive list of fundamental rights including the safeguarding of interests of all minorities wherever they might be. One uniform principle must be evolved in this connection and applied to the whole country. Once that was done the question of drafting a constitution for free country would not be difficult.

164. On Constituent Assembly: Viceroy to Secretary to State. (Tel.),
9 December 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2161, NAI.

[Extracts]

Meanwhile I had a further talk with Birla yesterday, the record of which goes to you by today's bag. He is clearly greatly disturbed at the prospect of a break and urged insistently that I should try to help Congress by blending their proposal for a Constituent Assembly without commitment to discuss the constitution further at the end of the war in view of the pressure of the Left Wing, and the fact that they might soon get out of hand. We could readily, he said, have defence, commerce, industry and the like settled outside in whatever way we liked so long as the Right Wing and the Working Committee could be assisted to get away from the Left. What we ought to do now is to promise a Constituent Assembly which in actual fact would never come into being. We could muddle the words as much as we pleased as everyone knew perfectly well that it was quite out of the question to hold a Constituent Assembly. But if we could give the promise and even if we concealed the existence of a blank cheque Congress would take Federation during the war a year after the expansion of the Executive Council on the lines already suggested by me, and would readily leave the Constituent Assembly until after the war. The function of the Constituent Assembly, he explained, would at that point be to settle the constitution of India: but he begged me not to pay too much attention to the matter as there never would be a Constituent Assembly.

He proceeded that he was profoundly disturbed by Jinnah's statement of 6th December, text of which has been telegraphed to you separately, and begged that His Majesty's Government should help the Congress over this matter and bring the Muslims to their senses.

As regards his main proposition, he suggested that the wise thing would be for us to work things out in detail and secure the agreement of Gandhi behind the scenes before obtaining any public declaration of policy. Some concession would probably be necessary to Gandhi, e.g., over the election of States' representatives. Gandhi's technique was at present to accept any settlement however extravagant emerging from the Left Wing and to proceed to put his own interpretation on it. He was already interpreting the phrase 'Constituent Assembly', and the longer he continued to do so, the less objectionable I should find the Constituent Assembly to be. He begged me to make an appeal to Gandhi.

I told him that I had worked pretty hard on this business since September and that you and I had got with considerable difficulty various concessions out of His Majesty's Government. We had no return. My credit was now wearing rather thin, and I was not going to move again or have Mr Gandhi to see me here again without promise of reasonable hope of positive results. Neither from my point of view nor from that of Gandhi could I continue to face failure. I said that I was

extremely despondent about the whole picture, and suggested that he and his friends quite overestimated the strength of their position at the moment. Their stock both here and at Home went down every day with these extreme utterances by responsible spokesmen in the Congress Party, and the opposition of the minorities and the Princes was quite clearly definitely hardening. I begged him to think over the position seriously in the light of what I had said to him, and he promised to do so. He has since indicated that he would like to try his hand at a formula with the help of Rajagopalachari which he could let me see informally at Calcutta.

165. The Political Awakening of Indian Women

Vijayalakshmi Pandit, *So I Became A Minister*, Kitabistan, Allahabad and London, 1939, pp. 63–78.

Twenty years ago, political consciousness in the Indian woman had not been aroused. The educated woman confined her interest to her home and when she felt the urge for expression outside her domestic duties, she sought to satisfy it by social work of a mild order.

In 1930, when Mahatma Gandhi began his now famous march to Dandi to break the Salt Law, he made a special appeal to women to leave the four walls of their home and join their men in the new movement he was about to inaugurate. What followed might well be called the miracle of Gandhi. Hundreds of women from all over the country threw aside the conventions of a century and came forward to join the Civil Disobedience Movement. Over 2,000 women courted imprisonment and served sentences, ranging from six weeks to two years, with a cheerfulness and fortitude which was amazing, and many others who did not go to jail played a brave part in those difficult days. During the period when this movement was at its height, and men were being arrested in ever increasing numbers, the women not only carried on their work with remarkable endurance but showed surprising powers of organizing ability and initiative.

Today the Indian woman has entered the political arena in earnest, but to fully understand the change that has taken place, it is necessary to trace her background.

Brought up in comparative seclusion and complete ignorance of life outside her home, the Indian woman was a shy and retiring creature. Education during this period had begun to progress and an increasing number of girls went to schools while some even continued their studies after leaving school and went on to college. In a few instances, girls were seeking to earn a living for themselves mainly as primary school teachers, but nonetheless the position of woman both in the home and in society remained unchanged. A measure of freedom was given, but in all-important matters she was restricted and had no voice. A myth has persisted that, in spite of purdah and other social handicaps, the Indian woman was the real power inside the home. All sorts of instances have been quoted to prove this theory and various historical records have been brought to light to show that all real power lay in the hands of the elder women of the family. This is, in my opinion, an entirely wrong representation of the case and is the argument used by those men who, though outwardly educated, have not been able to uproot from their minds the inherited superstition and tradition of ages. It was not unusual a few years ago to hear a man who was performing the marriage of his fourteen year old daughter, defend his action by saying he was obliged to consent to the marriage as his mother insisted, and she being the virtual ruler of the family, he was obliged to give in, in spite of his own advanced views, and so on. It is amusing to note in passing that the mother has never been known to interfere with his own pursuits or pleasures! This mother or wife, as the case may be, was seldom seen but was a useful person to have in the background, and the myth of her power had helped many a weak man out of uncomfortable corners. By itself this would not have mattered very much, but the constant repetition of it had, to a great extent, affected

the minds of the women themselves who, while living practically as slaves in their own homes, really imagined they had as much power as they wanted. A century of hard work in matters of social reform had not been able to convince woman that she was the underdog, and until she realized her position and aspired to something higher, there could be no progress, social or political. But what social reformers had failed to do was accomplished by Gandhi almost by magic.

During the early part of the Congress movement, the average middle class woman indignantly refused to listen to any talk about freedom either national or personal. One very smug and respectable lady whom I visited completely lost her temper when I urged her to take an interest in matters which were of vital importance to the nation. 'Why should I leave my home and go out to do political work? Is it not my duty to serve my husband and give him sons? Why should I bother about freedom for the country?', she asked. I suggested that possibly she might enjoy a little personal freedom, but here again I was wrong. 'I have as much freedom as a decent woman asks for. It is only women like you who have left your homes who talk about freedom.' In vain I attempted to explain that I had not left my home, that I had the welfare of my husband and children as much at heart as she had, but my words left her cold. Such were the conditions in my own province, the United Provinces, before the coming of Gandhi.

The response to Mahatma Gandhi's call was, as I have said, beyond all expectation, and barriers which had seemed insurmountable were broken down. Even the lady who had disagreed with my ideas of freedom in 1926 came out voluntarily in 1932 and joined a woman's volunteer corps while in an advanced state of pregnancy. She also courted imprisonment and actually produced a son (her fourth, I think!) in jail, thus proving to the world that a good woman does not forget the interests of her family even in prison!

With the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement many of the women who had taken an active part in it, felt at sea. They were no longer content to sit in idleness in their homes. During the movement they had come in contact with new people and ideas, and it was no longer possible for them to go back to their domestic duties with nothing else as an outlet for the new energy they found within themselves. There came a period of unrest and a vague dissatisfaction with life. A large number of women realizing their lack of education joined schools and colleges and in many instances studied with their own daughters. They took up social work of various kinds, but after the hectic period through which many of them had passed, this type of work seemed tame and they desired to go out into the political field.

For some years these women who were sufficiently educated had served as nominated members of their municipalities, but in 1935 when the Congress decided to capture local bodies, many women belonging to the Congress and other ranks sought election and are now serving with ability on local boards.

About this period the enactment in England of the Government of India Act of 1935 brought matters to a head in India. Since 1929 Congress had worked on a basic policy that it was the right of Indians to frame a constitution for India. During this period Congress propaganda had spread throughout the country. When a constitution was being framed in England for India all political parties and organizations condemned it as unacceptable, and this unanimous verdict still remains unchanged. The Congress which is admittedly the biggest and most powerful political organization in India today went further, and decided that the new Constitution must be rejected. The Congress view being that what was needed was an entirely new constitution fit for the solution of India's many pressing problems. What was demanded by the Indian people, as represented by the Congress, was the replacement of the Government of India Act by a constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise. With this view, the Congress decided to participate in the General Election and clearly placed before the electorate in its manifesto the

issue on which this election was being fought, viz., the rejection of the Government of India Act. The manifesto stated in clear language the Congress attitude towards women.

The Congress has already declared that it stands for the removal of all sex disabilities whether legal or social or in any sphere of public activity. It has expressed itself in favour of maternity benefits and the protection of women workers. The women of India have already taken a leading part in the freedom struggle, and the Congress looks forward to their sharing, in an equal measure with the men of India, the privileges and obligations of citizens of a free India.

As soon as the announcement was made that Congress was contesting the General Election, women came forward to offer themselves as candidates. The enthusiasm of women members of the Congress was communicated to women outside the Congress party and the leading women's organization in India. The All-India Women's Conference, a non-political body, issued an appeal to all educated women to take part in the election and requested the President of the Congress to give all help to women candidates, this request being made on the strength of the Congress announcement that it stood for removal of all sex disabilities.

The amazing success of the Congress party at the General Election is now a well-known story and requires no repetition. Today there are 44 women in the provincial assemblies, the majority of them in every province being members of the Congress party. They are interesting themselves in all matters pertaining to the welfare of the country, especially in matters concerning the advancement of their sex.

A few incidents from my own election may serve to throw light on the spirit that won the general election in India. I was asked to contest a difficult seat, my opponent being the wife of the then Minister for education and a member of the old Assembly where she had been the only woman member. The constituency was a rural one consisting of about 38,000 men and women. Having had some experience of work in rural areas and knowing something of the mind of the villagers, I had never any doubt about my ability to capture this seat for my party. Friends were, however, frankly skeptical and considered my election lost even before I had filed my nomination papers.

This being India's first experience of a general election, the electorate required to be educated a good deal. It was the experience of all those who worked among the people at this time that, in spite of illiteracy, the people of the rural areas were quick to grasp the situation and had a far better appreciation of the power of the vote than the literate people of the towns, whose cramping education was in many instances responsible for a lack of independent thought and action. And here the women were to the fore. They were far quicker in grasping what the various opposing parties stood for, and except for the middle class women in the towns who refused to show any interest, they influenced their men and even tried to help with propaganda in their village. Our method was to approach the people through public meetings, pamphlets, etc. We did not, except in very rare cases, approach individuals.

Feeling in the country had been roused to fever-heart, and wherever people got together, the talk was of the coming election. Travelling in my constituency one day, I happened to enter a Railway compartment already occupied by an Indian student and an American, obviously tourist. The talk between them, as was usual in those days, turned on the election, and they began to discuss my chances for the local seat. They neither knew nor recognized me. The student was loud in praise of me. When he had been talking for some time, the American ventured to ask him what exactly I had done to deserve such eulogizing. The student was furious. 'Done!' he almost screamed. 'She does not have to do anything. She is our mother and our sister and she will win!!' Needless to say the poor American was thoroughly nonplussed, and still I think, failed to recognize my claim to success. But the story shows how the affection of a large section of the people was centered on

the Congress and those who were its representatives. It is small wonder then that Congress achieved such amazing and spectacular results.

But times have changed rapidly and woman in India walks abreast with man today. Congress has fulfilled its pledges and we have women working in Congress offices, also as Parliamentary Secretaries, Deputy Presidents of Councils, Whips, and in my own case as a Member of the Cabinet. Also, in spheres outside the political, women are forging rapidly ahead. Economic necessity has forced them to seek a livelihood and one sees an increasing number of girls and young women in the professions where they are working with ability. It is no longer considered improper for a girl to have a career and although such girls are still comparatively few, the urge for work and self-expression is responsible for their rapid advancement.

Many problems still remain to be tackled. India is a vast continent and it is not easy to solve all her difficulties. But the awakening of the womanhood of the nation is a hopeful sign. There is no doubt that India's progress in the past has been hampered by her women. There is also no doubt that in future achievements the glory will be shared by all those women—young and old and middle-aged—who, having seen the vision of the free India, are working side by side with their men to translate the vision of the night into the reality of the dawn.

166. Women and Communal Unity

Editorial, *Tribune*, 10 December 1939.

10 December 1939

We said the other day that men having made a mess of the communal question women should intervene and save India from the horrors of communal strife. This is precisely what Rajkumari Amrit Kaur said in the course of her address to the Women's Conference that met at Lahore on Saturday last. 'In the matter of communal unity,' she said, 'where men seem to have failed miserably, it is women who have got to solve the problem.' The Women's Conference, she added, has been composed of a body of women belonging to all creeds and communities but no communal feeling has marred their unity. This is a healthy sign and inspires the hope that with the help of women the communal question will soon be solved. Bovee says: 'Next to God we are indebted to women, first for life itself, then for making it worth living'. Will life for India's millions be worth living if the country is torn by wrangles? If any one suffers from these wrangles it is the woman. She should refuse to countenance a state of affairs that brings suffering to her dear and near ones. Communalists are the greatest foes of the country and must be given no quarter. It will not be an easy thing to drive them away from this land of ignorance and bigotry, but if women will take up the cause of national unity in right earnest there can be no doubt about the ultimate victory. Women have more than once condemned communal electorates. Why cannot they refuse to seek election on communal tickets? Why cannot they refuse to be members of communal organizations? Why cannot they refuse to attend functions held in honour of communal leaders? If they refuse to have anything to do with communalism and communalists, in course of time communalists will be brought to their senses. The time has, indeed, come for the women of India to meet in a convention and chalk out a plan for the establishment of national unity in India. Once national unity has been achieved India's political deliverance will only be a question of time. Then the Indian women will create—not subject people as at present—but self-respecting citizens who will be proud to say that they are Indians first. Women is the creator of life; let her also become the creator of national unity.

167. Day of Deliverance: Muslim Condemnation

Editorial, *Tribune*, 10 December 1939.

10 December 1939

The darkest cloud is not without its silver lining, and it does one's heart good to find that Mr M.A. Jinnah's singularly unpatriotic appeal to his co-religionists to observe the 22nd December as 'a day of deliverance and thanksgiving' has, by evoking universal condemnation in all independent Muslim quarters, demonstrated the fundamental national unity of India which it was the primary object of that appeal to deny. The first Muslim public man to refer to the subject was Mr Abdur Rahman Siddiqi, MLA, a member of the Working Committee of the Muslim League itself, to whose spirited condemnation of Mr Jinnah's ukase as 'not only inopportune and impolitic but positively suicidal' we have already referred. Mr Siddiqi is so thoroughly disgusted with Mr Jinnah's recent antics that he actually suggests that he should retire from politics, under the operation of the salutary principle of age-limit for retirement from services and professions laid down by the sages of India. In our issue of Saturday we published three more statements, all emanating from Muslim public men of undoubted standing and influence, in all of which Mr Jinnah's appeal was subjected to the same seething condemnation as in Mr Siddiqi's statement.

First of all we had the statement of Mr M.C. Chagla,¹ who has never belonged to Mr Jinnah's political tabernacle, but whose right to represent a large body of Muslim opinion Mr Jinnah himself will not question. 'Every one who loves his country,' he said, 'will be shocked and horrified at the statement issued by Mr Jinnah calling upon the Mussalmans of India to observe Friday, December 22, as a day of deliverance. When read of deliverance I thought that the British Government had repented its sins and overnight conferred freedom on India and Mr Jinnah, the erstwhile champion of India's freedom wanted us all to join in the song of victory. What Mr Jinnah wants us to celebrate, however, is the end of a Government which, however wicked and iniquitous it might be according to him, was elected by popular voice and commanded the confidence of the Legislature, and conceded assumption of power by Governors as representatives of British imperialism which we have all, including Mr Jinnah, sworn to put an end to.' Mr Chagla points out that the creed of the League is still independence, not of a community, but of the whole country, and asks how its members can put up with a statement from their accredited leader who gloats over the failure of democracy and the triumph of autocratic rule, and how they can sit quiet and see the country which they are pledged to liberate torn to pieces by their leader's tactics. Finally Mr Chagla asks Mr Jinnah not to drag the name of God into the controversy, reminds him that 'the God of the Muslims has always held up before his people the ideal of freedom, human dignity and equality of men,' and says that 'his statement is an insult to the principles and tenets of Islam.'

The second statement is by Khan Bahadur Dhikh Mohammad Jan, MLC, who, like Mr Siddiqi, is a prominent member of the League and is also a member of the League Party in the Bengal Legislature. He describes Mr Jinnah's appeal to his co-religionists to give themselves up to rejoicings and thanks giving, as Israeli's did upon their deliverance and thanks giving, from the oppression of the Pharaohs, as 'extremely funny and ridiculous,' and adds: 'There is not a shadow of doubt that the avowed aim of Mr Jinnah is to obstruct the progress of the country at all cost to his countrymen, including the Mussalmans ... Either due to inexperience or malignant spirit, he is repeatedly asking for the help of the Governors of the provinces who, as an irony of fate, not only profusely praised the outgoing ministers, but are pursuing the same policy as was initiated by the Congress Governments and have not so far paid any attention to his humble prayers.' As we said

yesterday while noticing Mr Siddiqi's statement, apart from the intrinsic improbability of the Congress Governments practicing oppression or persecution with regard to the Muslim or any other minority, there is absolutely no evidence in support of the charge which has been so recklessly brought against them by Mr Jinnah. Nor, for the same reason, can we for one moment accept the view that the Governors were guilty of any sin of omission and commission in not interfering with the Congress Governments in the exercise of their special powers or in showering encomiums upon them for the manner in which they had discharged their duties. But even assuming for the sake of argument that the wild charges made against the Congress Governments by Mr Jinnah and his friends were not without foundation, no right-thinking person can deny that Mr Jinnah's appeal to his co-religionists to celebrate with transports of joy the assumption of power by Governors, who were integral parts of those Governments and who not only showered praise on the outgoing Congress ministries but are continuing their policy in all essential respects, in a transparent absurdity.

The last and obviously the weightiest of the three statements is the one issued by as many as 16 Muslim MLAs in Bengal, who condemned Mr Jinnah's latest declaration as beating even his earlier performances. 'Mr Jinnah,' they say, 'has tried to give a new dispensation denying democracy and freedom to India and condemning in the process millions of Mussalmans to servitude and political subjugation. He has tried to undermine the forces which make for Indian unity and freedom and played into the hands—if one takes the most charitable view—of reactionary imperialism. But his latest statement is so astonishing that it has taken by surprise even his own supporters and one of them, Mr Abdur Rahman Siddiqi, has raised his voice in protest and warned the toy dictator of Malabar Hills against tarnishing the reputation of Indian Mussalmans in this shameful and irresponsible manner.' The signatories to the statement make it clear that they have never accepted Mr Jinnah's claim to be the only leader and guardian angel of Indian Mussalmans, that they have fought strenuously against the suicidal and insane policy to which he has tried to commit his community, and that they have always held that political parties must base themselves on considerations of economic interests. In their opinion the appeal to religion has been made by men like Mr Jinnah only 'to cloud the issues and safeguard vested interests against the just demands of those who have been exploited and starved to provide superfluity for the favoured few.' Turning to the subject matter of Mr Jinnah's appeal they remind him as we and others have done, that the Congress has gone out of office not on account of anything that Mr Jinnah has said or done, but because the Congress was not prepared to consider terms which apparently Mr Jinnah would be only too glad to accept. 'The most humiliating part of his effusion,' they say, 'is his abject appeal to Governors and their advisers to right those very wrongs whose existence till now they have denied or ignored.' 'That the Congress,' they add, 'has made mistakes and that Congressmen are making still greater mistakes nobody will deny, but it is possible for Mr Jinnah alone to proclaim his new faith in the infallible wisdom, justice and benevolence of a foreign imperialism. We do not know if the Muslim League is in the pocket of Mr Jinnah, but this we emphatically say that a vast number of Muslims all over India will refuse to have any respect for a League of which the conscience and the voice seems to be in the sole possession of a man so reactionary as Mr Jinnah has shown himself to be.' What a sad end for a public man who not long ago was in the front-rank of Indian Progressives and Home Rulers! History, we know, is replete with instances in which the radical of one generation became the conservative of another, but we can recall no case, at least in our own country, in which a staunch nationalist and a passionate champion of freedom and democracy was turned into a thoroughgoing communalist and reactionary and a sworn enemy

of democracy within practically the life-time of a single generation as has been the case with Mr Jinnah.

¹ Mohamed Currim Chagla (b. 1900); educated at St Xavier's High School and College, Bombay, and Lincoln College, Oxford; President of the Oxford Indian Majlis, 1922; Professor of Constitutional Law, Government Law College, Bombay, 1927–30; wrote articles and addressed public meetings in favour of the Nehru Report, August–December 1928; Secretary of the Bombay Muslim League, but resigned over the Nehru Report controversy; vice-Chancellor of Bombay University, 1946–47. In his statement reported in the *Hindu* of 8 December, Chagla Said: 'When I read of "deliverance", I thought that the British Government had repented of its sins and misdeeds and overnight conferred freedom on India and that Mr Jinnah, the erstwhile champion of India's freedom, wanted us all to join in the song of victory. What Mr Jinnah wants us to celebrate, however, is the end of a Government, however wicked and iniquitous according to him, but elected by popular choice and commanding the confidence of the Legislature, and the assumption of power by the Governor as the representative of British Imperialism, which we have all-including Mr Jinnah—sworn to put an end to'. Proceeding, Chagla stated that if independence was still the Muslim League's creed, 'how can members of the League put with a statement from their accredited and the triumph of autocratic rule? How can they sit quiet and see the country, which they are pledged to liberate, torn into pieces by tactics which Mr Jinnah proposes in the statement? And why does Mr Jinnah drag God into this controversy? I should have thought that one prays to God with humility and love in one's heart and seeks light from him. Love and humility and Mr Jinnah are things apart, and as regards light, Mr Jinnah has never needed it.' In conclusion Chagla declared: 'I am not one of Jinnah's followers, and if his appeal had been made to them, perhaps I would have said nothing. But when he chooses to issue this appeal to Muslims of India, I think it is my duty to protest against this insult to the principles and tenets of Islam.'

168. On 'Day of Deliverance'

'Smirching the fair name of Islam', Prof. Majid on Mr Jinnah's action, *Hindu*, 13 December 1939.

Madras
12 December 1939

'In his two very recent statements, Mr Jinnah has come out in his real colours. Both the pronouncements make disgusting reading, have a bad odour about them and constitute a provoking piece of post-prandial oratory,' says Professor Abdul Majid Khan, in a statement to the press, He adds:

'To call upon the Muslims of India to observe Friday, December 22, as a day of deliverance is to exult at the exit of the popular Ministries that left no stone unturned to ameliorate the hard lot of the masses and in particular strove hard to better the economic condition of the minorities. Mr Jinnah should know once for all that the sickening reiteration of cent per cent baseless charges against the Congress Ministries can hardly alter hard facts, which have established beyond the shadow of a doubt that far from doing any injustice to the Muslims, the Congress in reality adopted a policy of studied impartiality towards them. Mr Jinnah left the matter of the redress of the Muslim grievances (real or imaginary) entirely in the hands of the Viceroy. So, Muslim India is entitled to know from the Viceroy (through Mr Jinnah) the specific gross cruelties. The Congress is no longer in office; the Governors are quite free to collect damning evidence against the Congress Ministries.

'Assuming for a moment that the Congress Ministries are found guilty of violating the rights and liberties of the Muslims, Mahatmaji, on behalf of the Congress, will certainly make ample amends and make the repetition of ugly occurrences impossible. Hence the summoning of the Constituent Assembly. The remedy which Mr Jinnah is proposing on the other hand is no remedy at all. Nay, it is worse than the disease itself. His most recent statements unmistakably prove that he is extra-keen on giving an indefinite lease of life to British Imperialism. Undoubtedly, Mr Jinnah

has out-O'Dwyered O'Dwyer in asking his followers to go into ecstasies over the resignation of the Congress Ministries, and in opposing the idea of the calling of the Constituent Assembly.

'A true Muslim prizes freedom most, for, to him, life and liberty are synonymous terms. No Muslim can ever be a slave and a slave is anything but a follower of Islam. Mr Jinnah, therefore, stands convicted at the bar of the Islamic world opinion of smirching the fair name of Islam by his deliberate travesty of the ideals of democracy and republicanism, which are the main fundamentals of Islam.'

169. Constituent Assembly

Hindustan Times, 16 December 1939.

15 December 1939

A reiteration of the Congress demand for a Constituent Assembly as the only solution for the Indian problem was made by Jawaharlal Nehru at a Press Conference this evening, on Lord Zetland's latest pronouncement of India.

'Lord Zetland occupies a high office, but many of his recent utterances can hardly be termed responsible or helpful. I have no desire to discuss his latest speech in any detail. He has raised some novel points and arguments and laid stress on the minorities question specially. No one in India can possibly ignore this question, and all of us are obviously desirous of solving it to the satisfaction of the various parties concerned. How is it to be solved within the context of democracy? Obviously the fundamental principles governing any consideration of any aspect of the Indian problem are democracy and unity of India. The suggestion put forward by the Congress that all these matters should be decided by a Constituent Assembly meets in the principle all the difficulties raised. This does not mean that all our problems are simple of solution or that there will not be complications and difficulties to face. But it does offer not only a suitable method but the only way within the context of democracy. The mass of the people, by adult suffrage, elect their representatives, all the principal minorities are represented and have a voice in the shaping of India's future. In regard to their particular problems, it may be said that a minority's rights might be over-ridden by a majority vote. That has been got over by the suggestion that such rights should be settled by agreement. If there is no agreement about a specific issue then the only proper course is to refer it to an independent arbitration such as the League of Nations or the International Court at Hague'.

Nehru added: 'Nothing could be fairer than this, and no minority can possibly object to it. It avoids the possibility of the majority forcing its will on a minority in regard to the minorities' special rights and interests. It avoids also the absurdity of a minority imposing its will on a majority. The importance of the Constituent Assembly procedure is to get the real opinion of the masses, Hindus, Muslim Sikhs, etc. through their elected representatives. The question does not arise, then of whom the Congress represents or the Muslim League or any other party. If these organizations command the confidence of the people, their nominees will be elected to the Constituent Assembly.

'I agree with Lord Zetland that it is a little absurd to consider the Muslims in India as a minority. Not only their great numbers, but the fact that in large areas of the country they are in a majority, makes it clear that no minority question really arises. Ordinarily speaking, such numbers warrant no protection as they can well look after their own interests. As a matter of fact, in predominantly Muslim areas like the Punjab, Bengal, Sind, the NWFP and Baluchistan, the minorities are non-Muslims and many of them have demanded protection. If India is looked at as

a whole, these various factors balance one another and prevent misbehaviour of any religious or racial group.

‘Lord Zetland unfortunately still thinks in terms of a by-gone age and has a semi-feudal outlook on life. He does not realize that new forces are convulsing India. Even among the Muslims the mass of the people are claiming their own rights from their upper class and sometimes their semi-feudal leaders. The problems of India are essentially economic, though a continuous attempt is made, and has again been made by Lord Zetland, to make them appear to be racial and minority problems. Lord Zetland possibly still thinks of the Princes of India as the hereditary rulers and of the Rajputs and other classes as the obvious military classes. But things are very different in the India of today and all this attempt to hide the real issues cannot last long in this dynamic situation.

‘I can well understand the opposition of the British Government to the idea of the Constituent Assembly because such an Assembly necessarily puts an end to British Imperialism. Between the position of Indian nationalism and that of British Imperialism there is no common factor. If the British Government is unable to agree to India determining her future, we are equally unable to agree to the British Government interfering in any way in such a decision. We agree to differ, and the future will decide whose will prevails. But I cannot understand how in reason any individual or group in India standing for Indian freedom, more specially standing for real democracy in India, can oppose the Constituent Assembly conception. Are they afraid of going to the electorate? The only alternative to this is that they prefer British rule or interference of Indian freedom. There is no other way of having a free constitution in India and every other method involves a measure of dictation from abroad. The alternatives are as previously stated, constitution of British domination and the development, sporadically or otherwise, or Sovietism in India. I do not know how the mass of Indian people will decide in the particular matter, but I am prepared to leave it to them and take the risk. The days of small groups at the top deciding the fate of India cannot last.’

170. Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee

AICC Papers, File No. P-24 (Part-2), Microfilm Roll No. 8634, NMML. See also enclosures: 1 and 2, Report for the year 1939, (Part II).

Morarji Desai to the General Secretary, All India Congress Committee, Allahabad.

Ahmedabad

18 December 1939

Dear Friend,

In reply to your circular No. 25 P-I/2562 dated 24.12.39 I have to inform you as under:

1. Under the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committees there are (a) 5 District Congress Committees, viz., (1) Ahmedabad DCC (2) Kaira DCC (3) Panch Mahals DCC (4) Broach DCC and (5) Surat DCC and (b) 34 Taluka Congress Committees and (c) about 25 village Congress Committees.

2. The Gujarat PCC has 5 office-bearers—the President, the Vice-President and 3 Secretaries and the five District CCs have 5 Presidents, 5 Vice-Presidents and 10 Secretaries, that is, in all 20 office-bearers. 34 Taluka Congress Committees have each 3 office-bearers totaling 102 and each village C.C. has two office-bearers, that is, 50. Thus total number of office-bearers is $(20 + 102 + 50) = 172$.

3. The amount of membership fees received during the year comes to Rs 20,038. The total number of members enrolled is 80152.

4. Figures for income from other sources will be sent hereafter.

5. Each District Congress Committee appointed one or more auditors to examine and audit the accounts of every Congress Committee under its jurisdiction.

6 and 7. Necessary figures and information are supplied herewith under statement 1.

8. The Gujarat PCC held 4 ordinary general meetings and 5 meetings of its Executive committee. Figures of meetings of the District CCs will be sent hereafter.

The information on items 4 and 9 has been asked for from District CCs today and will be supplied no sooner it is received.

I also send herewith a copy of the report of the work done in Gujarat during the year 1939 upto 30.9.39 which will give you the necessary information required by you under item 10.

Yours sincerely,

[Enclosure: 1]

Report to be submitted to the AICC of the work done in
Gujarat during the year 1939

Ahmedabad
18 December 1939

During the year under report, Gujarat PCC carried on general propaganda of the Congress throughout the Province, through its district and taluka and various village Congress Committees.

The following items represent the chief activities:

1. Enrolling of Congress Members—An extensive propaganda was carried on throughout the province for the enrolment of primary members. Though membership figures have been increasing every year for the last 5 years, the membership this year is less than that of last year mainly because the enrolment in the states within the bounds of this province has been less on account of several causes. Congress workers are coming in greater and greater contact with the masses. Now peasants, Harijans, Bhils and other depressed classes have begun to recognize the Congress as their only protector in difficulties. Our workers do all they can to remove their difficulties.

Total number of members enrolled is 80151 out of which ... are Urban and rest ... are Rural. Total number of members required for sending the full quota of delegates from Gujarat is 58,000.

2. Local Boards and Municipalities of Gujarat—All the district local Boards and the large majority of municipalities in the Province have majority of Congress members. Congress members of these bodies work as a disciplined party with definite rules under the guidance of the Central committee of four members appointed by the Gujarat PCC.

3. General Khadi propaganda is carried on by all Congress committees, while special work in this direction is done by the AISA. During national and the Gandhi Jayanti weeks the Sale of Khadi was taken up as one of the chief items by various committees. This sale amounted to Rs 1,66,553. Ahmedabad City Congress Committee sold Khadi Hundis worth Rs 1,18,679 during the last Gandhi Jayanti. In several centres spinning is becoming more and more popular as a result of the increase in spinning wages. Workers have to withhold further extension on account of the difficulty of selling all the Khadi so produced. Efforts are being made to increase the sale of such Khadi locally so that spinning activities can be extended further. The formation of a Central Board for coordination of production and sale in Khadi in this Province is being considered.

4. Harijan work is carried on by the Gujarat Harijans Sevak Sangh. It conducts Schools and Ashrams for Harijans, inquires into their difficulties and grievances and tries to remove them as far as possible. It works in co-operation with various Congress Committees which give them all necessary help.

Prohibition

5. Prohibition: In addition to the area mentioned in our last year's report as declared 'DRY AREA' by the Congress Ministry, more than five talukas were added as 'DRY AREA' this year. The result of this campaign of prohibition has been splendid and total prohibition is now a question of time in the whole of British Gujarat. With the resignation of the Congress Ministry, the people have begun to wonder if and how long this work will be carried on now in the spirit in which it has been begun and carried on so long.

Provincial Legislature

6. Congress MLAs and MLCs are doing all they possibly can, to help the villages and agriculturists by occasionally visiting their constituencies and showing them ways and means to overcome their difficulties and thus remain in constant touch with them. Two Bills affecting agriculturists—one for the protection of tenants and the other for the relief of agriculturists' debts—were passed by the Assembly just before the Congress Ministry resigned. They have been reserved by the Governor for the Viceroy's assent which have not yet been received. It is however hoped that it will soon be received. These two legislations will give much relief to tenants and indebted agriculturists.

States People

7. As mentioned in our last year's report, campaign for civil liberties and responsible Governments in some states in the Province were started under the guidance of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. During this year States' Peoples' Conferences were held in Bhavnagar, Limbdi, Rajkot, Baroda and Jamnagar. The severe and brutal repression going on in these areas is now a matter of history and does not require any description here. The people are putting up with the ugly situation in a very patient manner.

Gujarat Mahasabha Seva Dal

8. After the Haripura Session of the Indian National Congress it was found necessary to have a volunteer organization of the Congress in the Province. On the report and recommendations of the Sub-Committee appointed for this purpose, a volunteer unit in Ahmedabad City was started as an experiment and after three months the GPCC decided to extend the scheme throughout the Province. The Gujarat Mahasabha Seva Dal actually came into existence on the last Sunday of December 1938 when it was declared started at the flag salutation function.

Organization

The Seva Dal is organised and controlled by the Working Committee of the GPCC through the Provincial organizer appointed by it. The Provincial organizer carries on the work in the province through the District, taluka and local organizers appointed by the respective Congress Committees.

The training staff is to help the organizer in general work and look after the training and organization. They also command the units when on actual service.¹

Statement

There are 5 Congress districts in Gujarat Province consisting of 5 British districts and many Native States which include (1) whole of Baroda State (2) Kathiawad States (3) Cutch States (4) Small States of Ravakantha, Mahikhanta and Sabar Kanth Agencies. The areas of these Native States are assigned to the adjoining British districts.

<i>Congress DCC</i>	<i>Population of British District</i>	<i>Population Native States</i>	<i>Total Population</i>
1. Ahmedabad DCC	10,72,525	58,01,703	68,74,228
2. Karira DCC	7,41,650	5,71,418	13,13,068
3. Panch Mahals DCC	4,54,526	7,19,453	11,73,370
4 Broach DCC	3,34,170	5,09,317	8,43,487
5. Surat DCC	7,43,613	6,21,102	13,64,715
	33,46,484	82,92,993	115,69,477

¹ The remaining part of the report deals with the recruitment, training and service.

[Enclosure: 2]

Report for the Year 1939 (Part II) in continuation of the
report submitted and posted to AICC office on 18.12.39

Ahmedabad
19 December 1939

Over and above the general work connected with the programme laid down by the Congress, AICC or the Congress ministries, two very important works were done in the Surat District during the course of the current year.

The GPCC¹ has adopted the policy of capturing Local Bodies. All the District Boards of Gujarat are Congress boards. The financial position of the Boards is very poor, so poor that it is impossible for them to meet even the elementary needs of the people. The communications which are under the charge of the Boards are in a hopelessly bad condition. It is not possible to improve this position without any substantial help from Government or taxation. Both of these are not possible. The Surat District Board therefore decided to remedy this by voluntary labour on the part of the people. The scheme was known as the 'Village Self Help Scheme'. Huge propaganda was made and in the National Week special stress was laid upon this work. The week was very well celebrated. In nearly half the villages of the Surat District work worth a lakh and a half rupees was done by voluntary labour. This has taught very important lesson of self-help to village people who have begun to understand that many things can be done by voluntary organization without money. This idea has taken root and the people have now begun to do village works on the basis.

The other, much more important and of far-reaching consequences, was the work of the abolition of what is known as 'Hali System' in the Surat District. It is a system peculiar to this District and is perhaps centuries old. Under it an agricultural labourer, who is called a 'Hali' and generally belongs to a lower caste known as 'Dubala', binds himself to serve his master for life for a few seers of grain a day in a token of a few rupees borrowed from him for marriage. Practically major portion of agricultural servants in the District work under this system. It works from generation to generation. The son binding himself for his marriage expenses as a father did for his own. It need not be said that the system is akin to serfdom and is very severely criticized by Europeans in old settlement reports, and letters by Indian reformers. Of course it had no legal sanction. But by custom it persisted, so much so that even the 'Hali' would not believe that he was not bound to work merely on the ground of his having borrowed the money.

The attention of the Congress workers was drawn to the question so early as 1921. Sjt Narhari Parikh,² a veteran Congress worker of Gujarat took up work amongst these people and started a

night school for them in one of the villages of Bardoli taluka. It was vehemently opposed by the agriculturists. Sjt Narharibhai had to go on fast and at last closed the school. But time did not work (*sic*). The feelings of the people began to soften and prior to the Haripura Congress when again work was begun amongst the Dubalas on the mass scale, very little opposition was given. The work was begun by impressing upon the Dubalas that unless they gave up drink and ceased contracting debts for marriages it was impossible for them to be free. After this work bore some fruit, an attempt was made to explain to the agriculturists that the system demoralized them also, it made them helpless and was not economical in the long run. At last a committee was formed to find a way. The Committee did so. It decided that the debts of all those who had put in twelve year's service after borrowing were to be written off, and in the case of others at the rate of 1/12th per year of service. In any case the Halis were free and were not bound to work. This formula was accepted by all the agriculturists and Halis of the taluka at a joint meeting under the presidentship of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on the 26th of January the Independence Day. Gandhiji was at that time in Bardoli; so he attended the meeting and blessed the solution. From that day the Hali system was abolished in Bardoli taluka and the Halis liberated.

Side by side with the work in Bardoli taluka, this work was also begun in another taluka of the district, viz., Olpad, and on the 19th of April the Hali system was abolished and the Halis liberated in Olpad taluka also.

Surat District has eight talukas, still in 6 talukas the system is going on, but it has begun to totter. The work done in the two talukas has brought tremendous awakening amongst the Dubalas of the whole district and it is hoped that in one or two years' time Surat District will be free from the stigma of preserving this medieval form of semi-serfdom.

Very little difficulty was felt in implementing the change. The agriculturists have accommodated themselves to the change in their relations with their servants. But the consequences amongst the Dubalas and other downtrodden classes are very far-reaching. The Congress has been able to infuse a spirit of hope amongst these people. The Congress has penetrated amongst what are known as underdogs, who now feel that it, that is, Congress only is its best friend.

Morarji Desai

¹ This was organised on 6–13 April to launch a country-wide campaign against the imperialist war.

² Narhari Parikh (1891–1957); educated in Ahmedabad and Bombay; met Gandhi in 1915 when the latter had just returned from South Africa, was deeply impressed by his philosophy and became a devout Gandhian; in 1928 he joined the Bardoli Satyagraha and worked under Sardar Patel; devoted to educational work; looked after the educational work of the Harijan Ashram at Sabarmati from 1935 to 1948; when the first Congress ministry was formed, he was appointed chairman of the basic education board; established the first rural university in India at Sanosara in Gujarat; was connected with Gandhiji's *Navjivan* from 1926–1942.

171. On 'Day of Deliverance'

Tribune, 21 December and Hindustan Times, 19 December 1939. The names of the signatories are listed in *Hindustan Times*.

19 December 1939

The following appeal, signed by about 200 Muslims of the Meerut district, has been issued to their Constituent Assembly-religionists in India in connection with Jinnah's call to the Muslims of India to observe a 'Day of Deliverance'. The signatories include Qazi Najamudin Ahmad, ex-Chairman, Meerut City Board, Maulvi Mubarak Husain, Manager, Madrasa Dar al-Ulum, Abdul Hakim, Member, District Board, Hafiz Abdul Hamid, president, Majlis-i Ahrar-i Islam, Maulana Ghulam

Siddiq, Mufti Mohammad Ishaq, president, Jamiyat al-Ulama-i Hind, Maulvi Asadullah Khan, Hakim Samiullah Khan, Syed Muzaffaruddin, Hafiz Nazir Ahmad, M. Tehsin Ali Khan, Ch. Lutf Ali Khan, Maulvi Bashir Ahmad, member, District Board, Munshi Rahmat Hussain, member, District Board, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Dr Asadullah Khan, Ch. Illyas Ahmad Khan, Sheikh Sadiq Husain, Syed Manzoor Hasan and Sheikh Karimuddin.

‘Mr Jinnah, president of the All India Muslim League has, a few days ago, issued a statement in which he has asked the Muslims of India to celebrate December 22, 1939, as a day of deliverance as a result of the Congress Government resigning and has directed the Muslims to offer thanks in prayers to Almighty who has thus saved Muslims from the Congress tyranny. It has further been suggested in that statement that resolutions should be passed on that day asking Governors and their advisers to investigate into the acts of cruelty and injustice perpetrated by the Congress Governments against the Muslim and rectify them wherever necessary.

But what is this day of deliverance? Why is it celebrated? What is the motive behind the scene? Every sensible man can answer these questions if he carefully surveys the present political conditions. But one thing is plain enough and that is that as a result of this inopportune and harmful movement communal hatred will be accelerated.

But the struggle of liberty has never been checked by such petty squabbles and can neither be stopped by any power whatsoever. The biggest demonstration against a national movement will fade away after a momentary flash, leaving behind a dark spot on the pages of history.

Mr Jinnah should well have confined his merry-makings and celebrations of the day of deliverance to the men of his own thinking. His invitation is obviously meaningless. The claim of the Muslim League to be the sole representative organization of the Muslims has often been challenged and exposed, still the few leaders of the Muslim League are never tired of harping on the tune that their decision is the decision of the entire Muslim community.

The day of deliverance is the latest master-piece of the first class political wisdom. But the question remains as to what the Muslim League or to be more accurate the leaders of the Muslim League have gained by the withdrawal of the Congress ministries. During the last two and a half years, most virile sort of propaganda has been carried on against the Congress and the Congress ministries by the Muslim League propagandists from every platform or in the press. It is also well known to every body that a long list of Congress atrocities was prepared and presented to the Viceroy. Dr Rajendra Prasad, President of the Indian National Congress, requested Mr Jinnah to refer his grievances against the Congress to the arbitration of the independent judge but the worthy President of the Muslim League summarily rejected that offer on the convenient plea that he had already referred the matter to His Excellency the Viceroy who would do the needful. But it is unfortunate that the Viceroy has not been able to do anything so far in that matter. But there has been one thing achieved by the position taken up by Mr Jinnah and that is that the diehard politicians of Great Britain who are ever ready to avail of every means and methods to crush the movement of liberty and did make capital out of the attitude of the President of the Muslim League. A huge storm of the rights of the minorities has been raised and the national movement is being wrecked. However, His Excellency the Viceroy has so far done nothing in respect of the netitious grievances of the Muslim League against the Congress Government. But from the various statements of the Governors of the Provinces and other official statements that have been published after the withdrawal of the Congress ministries it is obvious that in the eyes of the British officials the accusations of the Muslim League have no significance.

It is an insult to the Muslims that on every occasion the few highly placed among them always sacrifice them at the altar of their personal gains. After all, what is this blessed day of deliverance? Have the Muslims of India got rid of slavery? Has the Muslims world been relieved of the political

and economical exploitation of Europe? Or was all this big cry of Muslim rights for the last two years and a half being raised for foreseeing the Congress Government out of office, and then declaring to the world the glorious day of deliverance? Or does the deliverance of Muslims of India consist in the transference of power in the hand of the British Bureaucrat and therefore, the Muslims are being invited at the consummation.

Every association has certainly a right to carry on its propaganda and to hold its demonstration but at the same time the moral aspect of it cannot be ignored. Islam abhors all demonstrations based on falsehood. If you accuse any body it immediately becomes your religious and moral duty to prove your accusations. The accusations that are being made against the Congress ministries are nothing more than a fictitious tale until and unless they are tested and proved. It has not been examined even on the principles of the ordinary procedure of the law of evidence, nothing to say of the tenets of the jurisprudence of Islami *Shariat*. The Muslim League wants to thank God on the day of deliverance but it is impossible to deceive God who sees everything and hears everything and who can reach the lowest depth of every heart. It is possible that innocent and ignorant Muslims may be deceived and brought round to celebrate Mr Jinnah's day of deliverance but for God's sake do not bring in the name of God in this affair. He will never accept your ungratefulness as thanks and prayers.

Thank God there is that silver lining in the dark clouds and the sensible section of the Muslim League is opposed to Mr Jinnah's day of deliverance and considers this programme wrong and suicidal. Mr Abdur Rahman Saddiqui, a prominent member of the Muslim League executive, has opposed this programme most vehemently and we hope that our leaders here will also consider it fit and proper to refuse to celebrate this day of deliverance which is definitely a wrong step and harmful movement.

We strongly appeal to all the Muslims of India that before committing themselves to Mr Jinnah's day of deliverance they should take into account the grave political and delicate situation in which our country is placed at this time. God has given us the light and we should try to find our way by the help of that light. The few highly placed who are usually ignorant of the conditions of masses may not always be right in their judgments and decisions. In our opinion the prescription of the day of deliverance will prove fatal to the interests of the Muslims.'

172. The Constructive Programme: S.K. Patil to Secretaries
Ward/District Congress Committees, 21 December 1939
AICC Papers, File No. G-53, 1939-40, NMML.

... The BPCC has appointed a Committee called the Council of Action to devise ways and means for preparing Congressmen for the coming struggle. The resolutions of the Congress Working Committee are also before you and they have to be implemented both in letter and spirit. Time has come when Congress Committees and Congressmen must take up the preparatory activities in hand in all seriousness and prepare themselves for any situation that might arise in the near future. With this object in view the Council of Action, with the concurrence of the BPCC, has formulated a tentative programme which is being submitted to you for immediate compliance.

1. Your Committee must immediately start enrolment of Satyagraha volunteers. There should be no scare about this business as Satyagraha is a normal phase of our life. The pledge forms necessary for enrolment will be supplied by the BPCC in the next two or three days. All volunteers so enrolled will have to attach themselves to one of the Centres of their choice, for constructive work. For the time being, the centers will be the Congress House and the offices of the District

Congress Committees in the city. If after enrolment a volunteer does not take to constructive work his name should be immediately removed from the list of active volunteers. Only those who can spare at least an hour every day for constructive work need enroll at this stage.

2. The constructive programme is well known. It consists of (a) spinning and popularization of Khadi, (b) Hindu–Muslim unity and (c) greater contact with the Harijans. All these items of the constructive programme must be seriously taken in hand and duly executed. In the office of your committee you must install at least half a dozen spinning wheels in working order so that those members of your Committee and those volunteers who may be attached to your center may use these wheels for spinning at your office. Spinning is to be made obligatory to all volunteers, including specially all members of your Executive.

3. Hindu–Muslim unity and unity among various communities and particularly with and among the minorities must be seriously taken in hand so that we may be able to foster a friendly feeling among our people, which is a condition precedent to any big political movement that we may hereafter launch. If you can get good many Hindu and Muslim volunteers on our active list and these can engage themselves in the constructive programme, it would be a more effective solution of the problem.

4. We must increase our contact with Harijans and we must sincerely try to remove their grievances to the best of our ability and possibility. It should be a special endeavour of your Committee to enroll as many Harijan volunteers as you can.

5. We must carry on a ceaseless propaganda among the public by means of meetings and distribution of handbills and leaflets. The immediate issue to be explained the people are as follows:

- (a) The Constituent Assembly—its constitution and functions;
- (b) Congress position vis-à-vis the World War.

173. All India Congress Committee

AICC Papers, File No. P-1/1939–40, Microfilm Roll No. 8642, NMML.

Camp–Wardha
23 December 1939

Circular No. 27(a)

The Secretary,
Provincial Congress Committee,

Dear Friend,

I am sending you herewith two resolutions passed by the Working Committee at its last meeting at Wardha. The resolution on the Political Situation reiterates our demand and points out that the communal question in this connection is irrelevant and the raising of it by the British Government is merely to cloud the issue. We are therefore ‘entitled to read in the British Government’s raising the communal question as reluctance to part with power.’ Naturally then we must complete our preparations for the final sanction behind our just demand, which is Civil Resistance. In this connection, the resolution directs all Congressmen to promote and seek goodwill between the different committees inhabiting in India, carry out the constructive programme with special attention to Charkha and Khadi which are the accepted symbols of ‘Non-violence, harmony and economic independence.’

The second Resolution deals with the observance of Independence Day. We have been observing this Day since 1930. This time the observance has a special significance attached to it

due to the political crisis through which the country is passing. Therefore, before we take the pledge, we are required to take stock of our efforts in the past. Without this stock taking the pledge is likely to become a mere form. The greatest instrument of a Satyagrahi is his own self. He has to analyse his past activities and find out whether he has made himself a fit instrument for the service of the starving millions of India, whether his service has not been tinged with self-interest and personal ambitions. He has to find out whether he has done his best to be just and generous to the minorities; whether he has carried out so far as in him lies the constructive programme. Only after we have taken stock of the past can we take the Independence Pledge in the proper spirit of service and humility. In that spirit the Working Committee would like all Congressmen to take the pledge this time on the appointed day.

The Working Committee would also like to gauge the strength of our army. It must necessarily consist of soldiers that not only believe in the goal of independence but also in the means that the High Command proposes to employ. Soldiers in any army must all employ for the time being the weapons prescribed by the High Command or else the army would be working at cross proposes and would be ineffective. The Working Committee, therefore, are anxious to know the numerical strength of its soldiers.

You will therefore please have the pledge translated in the language of your province and distribute it broadcast. You will send to this office as previously requested provincial reports of the progress of your activities.

Yours sincerely,
Gen. Secretary

174. Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee: N.S. Haridikar to
General Secretary, AICC

AICC Papers, File No. P-11, 1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8643, NMML.

Dharwar
24/25 December 1939

Dear Brother,

In reply to your Circular No. 25, I hereby give the following existing information. The following were obtained in reply to a circular of ours to all the Subordinate Congress Committees in the beginning of the year. Rest of the information has been asked from the District Congress Committees and as soon as it is received, this office will send it on to you.

1. Kindly see enclosures 1 and 2.

2. Usually the Executive Committees are formed on the following basis:

KPCC: 15 Council members out of which 6 are Officer Bearers, 1 President, 2 Vice-Presidents, 2 Secretaries and 1 Treasurer.

District Congress Committee: Mostly same as above, the strength being from 13 to 15.

Taluk Congress Committee: 3 to 5 Office bearers and the strength of the Council from 7 to 15.

Subordinate Congress Committee: 3 to 5 Office bearers and the strength of the Council 3 to 13.

The names of the Office bearers of the District Congress Committees, Taluk Congress Committees and most of the Group and Village Congress Committees are with us. If required the list as well as the total number will be sent.

3. and 4. Mainly the income of the Congress Committee, Committees in the Province is from the Membership. Statements of account have been called from the DCCs and after their receipt, information on these two heads can be supplied.

5. This point has been answered in detail while replying to the Questions 3 and 6 of your Circular No. 26. (See enclosure 3) The DCCs have also been requested to supply more information.

6. and 7. Detailed information as regards the population of the Province is given in the Enclosure 4, attached herewith. In the 1st page, Nos. 1 to 16 show where there are active DCCs. This year it is proposed to form DCCs in the 3 districts of Hyderabad State also, as there has been enrolment of members now. In the State area there are 3 groups viz., 1 Mysore State, 2. Kannada portion of Hyderabad State and 3. North Karnatak States. Page 2 and 3 of the enclosure 4, deals with Bombay Karnatak. Population by Talukas—and of the important towns in the districts are given therein. In the same way page 4 deals with Madras Karnatak while pages 5 and 6 give figures for Mysore State and Bangalore Cantonment.

8. Until now, the General Body of the PCC has met twice while the Provincial Council has met 7 times—the first meeting on 8-2-39 and the latest being on 3-12-39. As for the number of meetings of the subordinate Committees information has been asked for.

9. Apart from the All India observances, this PCC arranged for 29-10-39 to be observed as a day when public meetings were held and resolutions passed supporting the Working Committee's resolution and the stand taken by the Premiers in the Congress Provinces. Regarding the number, etc. information has been asked by the DCCs.

10. Reports have been called from the DCCs.

Your Brother,
Hon. Brother

Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee

'Congress House'
Dharwar

[Enclosure: 1]

Congress Organization
In
British Karnatak

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>No. of DCCs</i>	<i>No. of TCC</i>	<i>Town or Petha CC</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>Total</i>
1.	Belgaum	1	8	—	33	—	42
2.	Bellary	1	5	—	—	3	9
3.	Bijapur	1	8	5	25	—	39
4.	Coorg	1		—— Not Known ——			1
5.	Dharwar	1	11	—	48	1	61
6.	Karwar	1	6	—	10	—	17
7.	Mangalore	1	6	2	1	62	72
8.	Bangalore Cantonment	1	—	—	—	—	1
		8	44	7	117	66	242

Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee

‘Congress House’
Dharwar

[Enclosure: 1]

Congress Organization
In
State Karnatak

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>DCC</i>	<i>No. of TCC</i>	<i>Town or Petha CC</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>Total</i>
1.	Bangalore	1		—— Not Known ——			1
2.	Chitaldrug	1	9	2	—	59	71
3.	Hassan	1	5	1	—	3	10
4.	Kadur	1		—— Not Known ——			1
5.	Kolar	1	9	—	—	—	10
6.	Mysore	1	7	—	—	—	8
7.	Shimoga	1	8	2	1	—	12
8.	Tumkur	1		—— Not Known ——			1
Total		8	38	5	1	62	114

Note:

Mysore State

1. Before we could receive the full information, struggle for Self Government began in Mysore. As a result, now it is difficult to say how many Congress Committees are existing as they are out of touch with this Office.

Hyderabad State

2. All these previous years no attempts had been made to enroll Congress members and form Congress Committee in Hyderabad State. This year a beginning has been made to enroll members.

North Karnatak States

3. As regards North Karnatak States, in the portions which are surrounded by the British Districts, some Congress Committees were functioning until now. They are included under the respective Districts.

Total for the Province

<i>District</i>	<i>DCC</i>	<i>TCC</i>	<i>Town or Petha CC</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>Total</i>
British Karnatak	8	44	7	117	66	242
State Area	8	38	5	1	62	114
Total	16	82	12	118	128	356

175. Roy's Resignation from UPPCC: M.N. Roy to Nehru

Independent India, Vol. 3, No. 52, 24 December 1939.

The resolutions of the last Provincial Political Conference and the proceedings of the meeting of the Executive Council of the PCC in the presence of Gandhiji have compelled me to come to the conclusion that no useful purpose will be served by my remaining a member of the Council. Therefore, I hereby resign my seat on that body.

All along I did not think that, with a leftist majority, the Council should pursue the policy of complete conformity with the official views of the All India Working Committee of the Congress. I am firmly of the opinion that provincial organizations of the Congress have the right to hold independent opinions and press for their acceptance by the All India leadership. False ideas of unity and discipline only destroy internal democracy and weaken the organization. Of late, that danger has been growing inside the Congress. The Executive Council of UPCC, with a leftist majority, was expected to stand out boldly for checking that danger. Unfortunately that was not done. Feeling that my efforts will be of no avail, I purposely absented myself from its meetings for some time. If I were present in meetings where serious political and organizational decisions were made with which I did not agree, it would be my duty to express my disagreement publicly for the information of the entire provincial organization. That would disturb the convention that all resolutions of the Executive Council are unanimous. But remaining a member of the Council one tacitly shares the responsibility for all its actions. I cannot conscientiously do that as regards the decisions and tactic agreements made at the Allahabad meeting, nor the resolutions submitted to the Political Conference at Mathura. Therefore, I should no longer remain a member of the Council. By tendering my resignation, I register my disagreement with all those decisions, agreements and resolutions.

I should have voiced my opposition at the last Provincial Conference. But I did not wish to disturb the atmosphere of unity and harmony. Therefore, I absented myself.

In conclusion, let me affirm that no disrespect is meant for the Council which has chosen a course it considered to be the wisest. While disagreeing with the resolutions, I hereby declare myself bound by them, and my services remain at your disposal as much as ever.

176. Statement Showing the Number of Primary Members Enrolled by the Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee, Jabalpur

AICC Papers, File No. G-54, 1939, Microfilm Roll No. 8641, NMML.

26 December 1939

1. Raipur	18,155
2. Bilaspur	11,881
3. Jubbulpore	11,361
4. Khandwa	9,145
5. Hoshangabad	8,800
6. Narsingpur	7,930
7. Baghelkhand (States)	7,200
8. Saugar	7,140
9. Durg	4,803

(Contd.)

10. Chhindwara	2,451
11. Seoni	2,281
12. Mandla	1,826
13. Balaghat	1,766
14. Betul	4,000
15. Damoh	1,376
Total	1,00,115

Yours sincerely,
For Secretary

177. On CWC Decision: Satyamurti to Gandhi, 26 December 1939
Satyamurti Papers, File No. 21/1930-42, NMML.

I see the Working Committee has in spite of your advice passed a resolution asking us to continue the boycott of the Indian Legislative Assembly during the Delhi sessions also. I entirely disagree with this decision. I wish the Working Committee had given me an opportunity of explaining my point of view to them. As I have told Shri Mahadev Desai, I feel very strongly on this matter. I seek your permission to express my dissent publicly. But, of course, I shall dissuade from doing so, if you so desire, I want to do nothing which will weaken your hands to any degree.

On the question of the Constituent Assembly, I feel that alternatives may have to be explored. But in any case, I am against separate electorates for election of members of the Constituent Assembly. Nor can I agree with Sri C. Rajagopalachariar, if he is reported correctly, when he suggests that the special interests of minorities should be protected by decisions by themselves. We should come to an agreement or settlement by independent judicial arbitration. No minority should be a judge in its own cause.

On the general political situation also, I feel a settlement is not impossible. I should like to discuss these matters personally with you. May I come there? If so, kindly let me know when and where.

178. Independence Day: Statement by Hamid Khan
Vartman (Hindi daily, Kanpur), 28 December 1939.

Kanpur
26 December 1939

The Chief Secretary of the City Congress Committee, Shri Hamid Ali Khan, has issued the following statement:

26 January 1940 is going to prove a landmark in the history of our national struggle. On this day, we shall stand under the national flag and take a pledge to continue the struggle until we get complete independence. We have been celebrating Independence Day for the last ten years and have been taking a pledge with ever-increasing determination to put an end to the hegemony of imperialistic power. But the situation has become even more grave with the outbreak of the imperialistic war in Europe. The exploitation of our men and resources has increased. In spite of our intolerable poverty, we are being confronted with the communal problem in such a way that it is impossible to find any solution to it until we become the arbiters of our own destiny.

The continuance of imperialistic hegemony over India would mean the ever-present problem of communal conflict which could lead to bloodshed at any time. Moreover, this hegemony is a great obstacle to our political, economic and cultural progress.

At the moment we are standing on the brink of a great struggle. Kanpur has to play its role in this struggle. Our leaders have appealed for strict discipline on the part of those wish to join in this non-violent battle for freedom. There are just thirty days to go. But there is a great deal to be done to be able to celebrate this day with dignity and honour. The most urgent task is to enroll volunteers. We want 2000 educated volunteers. Captain Thakur Ram Singh is training volunteers in Shradhanand Park and other spots in the city. On behalf of the City Congress Committee I invite all of you who want to see this country win freedom to enroll quickly as volunteers.

I am confident that keeping in mind the glorious revolutionary traditions of Kanpur, its citizen and anti-imperialist organization will join hands with the City Congress Committee in celebrating this day.

179. Assam Provincial Congress Committee: Report of
 the General Secretary for the year 1939

AICC Papers, File No. G-53/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8641, NMML.

General Work: Organization

There are 13 organized District Congress Committees under the Assam Provincial Congress Committee. The personnel of APCC are as follows:

Shri Hem Chandra Barooah	–	President
” Bhuban Chandra Gogoi	–	Vice President
” Siddhinath Sarma	–	General Secretary
Maulvi A. Nural Haque	–	Treasurer
Shri Liladhor Barooah	–	Asst. Secretary
” Dev Kanta Barooah	–	Asst. Secretary

This year 13 paid organizers were appointed by the APCC in different districts to organize the Tribal areas and to carry on Congress propaganda work.

Mass Contact

Looking over the year under review, now all but run out, it is worthwhile to note that the mass contact movement has covered much wider ground than before. The prohibition of opium in the sub-divisions of Dibrugarh and Sibsagar, the ideas of total prohibition of the drug in other sub-divisions of Assam from 1940 enthused the mass mind to a great extent. The contemplated literacy drive gave an added push to the enthusiasm. The combination of all these factors gave a new outlook and a orientation to the mass contact movement and a wave of enthusiasm was let loose, which broke new grounds. Mills and gardens were brought under the ambit of the movement. Over 900 meetings were addressed by the prominent Congressmen during the year and the message of the Congress was brought home to the people. These lectures were supplemented by suitable pamphlets. Both the demonstrative and organizational side of the Congress were taken care of. The upshot of all these is that the Congress organization as a whole is better organised than before.

Congress Membership

The Congress membership this year has almost doubled over last year. Last year the number was 37,321 and this year the number has risen to 57,073. The list given in the Appendix shows the

number of members enrolled by each district Congress Committee. Regular propaganda is being carried on in the Tribal areas and paid workers have been appointed for the purpose. The enrolment of Tribal members is encouraging. Taking the total population of the Congress Province, that is, 56 lakhs into consideration, the enrolment is satisfactory. Sibsagar District Congress Committee tops the list with 12,619 members. Muslim Mass Contact has not made much headway. A resolution was adopted by the Working Committee of the APCC on 31.1.39 requesting the President, All India Congress Committee, to depute all-India Muslim leaders for a propaganda tour among the Muslim masses. Neither the President nor the AICC office took any step on this resolution though repeatedly requested. A deputation of Muslim League has toured Assam on a propaganda mission. The Working Committee of the AICC should take particular notice of the fact and depute Muhammadan leaders of all-India repute for a propaganda tour.

Number of Primary Committees

Four hundred Primary Congress Committees have been formed under the 13 District Congress Committees of the Assam PCC. There is a rise of 100 primary Congress Committees over that of last year. But it should be noted that 100 members form primary Congress Committee, with 50 members under each Primary Committee.

Constructive Work

It is a pleasure to note that constructive side of Congress work was taken in hand by some of the District Congress Committees. Under the auspices of Sibsagar DCC three Khadi centers were opened, one of which has been taken over by All India Spinners' Association. Workers have been trained in these centers in Khadi and sanitation work and trained workers have also started small centers in their respective areas. New scientific methods for better spinning and reeling of Muga-silk are being introduced in the villages by the DCC and two paper-making centers are also opened.

Village reconstruction scheme has been pushed through by some DCCs. The scheme embraces the digging of village tanks, clearing of old tanks, repairing and construction of village roads, sanitation work done to village families, opening of night and venture schools. Near about of 30 miles of village roads, were constructed by Sibsagar and Tezpur District Congress Committees and 10 new tanks were dug by Sibsagar DCC. In the contemplated mass literacy campaign of the Congress Coalition Ministry the adult mass of the people has seen their upliftment. The campaign began on behalf by the District Congress Committees, has roused the dumb millions of Assam to a sense of their dignity and self respect, and to enlighten them with the torch of knowledge a large number of night schools have to be opened by various District Congress Committees. In the near future more and more night schools will have to be opened by the Congress Committees to cope with the growing demand for adult education.

Training of Volunteers

The training of Volunteers for Congress work has not been lost sight of by the APCC. The District Congress Committees were asked to raise Trained Volunteer Corps. The Tezpur DCC goes ahead of other DCCs in this respect. Five Seva Dal camps were opened by the Tezpur DCC last year and 167 volunteers were trained at a cost of Rs 1100. The volunteers were recruited from the peasantry. And the training so captivated the imagination of the village-folk that they not only constructed the camp houses free of cost but freely give rice, vegetable and other eatables for the maintenance of the volunteers. Even a substantial part of the above mentioned sum was contributed by these village people. This year also Tezpur DCC contemplates to start a volunteer training camp in a

village centre. Sibsagar District Congress Committee intends to start a volunteers training camp at Sibsagar from 26th January '40. Mangaldoi DCC is expected not to lag behind. Some other District Congress Committee are expected to follow suit. The war sub-committee appointed by the APCC has asked each DCC to have well trained volunteer corps ready for any emergency.

All India Occasions

All the instance of the President, All India National Congress Committee demonstrations and meetings were held in all important towns and in important villages in Assam. Independence Day and Gandhi Jayanti were observed all over the Province.

APCC Sitings

During the year the Assam Provincial Congress Committee sat for five times. All important resolutions and the works done by Working Committee of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee were approved in the meetings of the APCC. The Working Committee of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee sat for 15 times till to date.

Various Sub-Committees

The following Sub-Committees were appointed by the Working Committee of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee during the year 1939.

- (i) Jail Reform Sub-Committee
- (ii) Line system Sub-Committee
- (iii) Scout Sub-Committee
- (iv) Honorary Magistrate
- (v) Domiciled Sub-Committee
- (vi) War Sub-Committee
- (vii) Election Dispute Sub-Committee
- (viii) Rules Sub-Committees
- (ix) Labour Sub-Committee

All the Sub-Committees submitted their reports.

Political Conference

The Assam Political Conference was held at Golaghat under the presidency of Shri Hemchandra Barooah, the President of Assam PCC. Many important resolutions were adopted in this conference. A Khadi and Village industries exhibition was also opened at that time by Shri G.N. Bardoloi then Premier of Assam at Golaghat. There is no district which did not hold this year its political conference.

Congress Office

The pressure of work in the office this year was high as the District Congress Committee are functioning orderly. Altogether 50 circulars were issued from the APCC Office during the year. The organizing Secretary, Sjt Liladhor Barooah toured the Province for three times to audit the accounts of the districts during the years. The accounts of all the DCCs were audited except North Lakhimpur which could not be done at the fixed time due to flood in the district. There is one Office Assistant and one office worker working in the office. For efficient working a paid office Secretary has become a necessity.

APCC President's Tour

On being elected the President of the Assam PCC, Shri Hem Chandra Barua, B.L. suspended practice and extensively toured round the Province during his term of the office inspite of his ill health. His tour was not confined to urban areas only. It included interior villages where the poor villagers did not get any opportunity of seeing the President of the Provincial Congress. The tour was undertaken to strengthen the Congress organization and to explain to the masses the present situation and the stand taken by the Congress in asking the Ministers to resign, in the Congress Provinces. The President, APCC is continuing his tour in the interiors...

Inclusion of a Member in the WC of the AICC

In view of the various special problems facing the Province of Assam the Working Committee of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee requests the President, All India Congress Committee and Mahatma Gandhi to include a member from Assam in the Working Committee of All India Congress Committee so that those problems may be placed before it for satisfactory solution. But it is a matter of great regret that this request has been turned down. Only once a member from Assam was included in the Working Committee. With its special problems Assam's claims for a member in the Working Committee must not be overlooked...

Composite Parliamentary Board

A composite Parliamentary Board consisting of nine members, 6 from Assam Valley and 3 from Surma Valley were appointed by the Working Committee of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee for developing close contact with and for the direction and guidance of the Assam Congress Parliamentary Party and the Assam Congress Coalition Government in carrying out the Congress policy and programme of work in the legislature, subject to the general control of the Working Committee of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee.

Observations on 9th July

Shri Subhas Chandra Bose's suggestion to observe 9th July 1939 as 'All India Day' throughout India was not taken up seriously, only three meetings were held at Dibrugarh, Goalpara and Shillong. The APCC did not take any notice of these meetings.

Accounts

The accounts of the DCCs except N. Lakhimpur were audited by the Provincial Auditor Shri Liladhor Barooah, member AICC. The financial year of the APCC commences from 1st January and ends with 31st December. The budget of the APCC for the year 1939 was framed by the Working Committee and was approved by the APCC on 26-2-39. The last year's accounts of the APCC and Nehru Fund were audited and adopted by the APCC. This year's accounts are ready for auditing. The accounts will be placed before the APCC when audited.

Delimitation of Constituencies

The Province was delimited into 60 constituencies for election of delegates and Provincial and district Tribunals have also been formed under the Constitution.

With the formation of Congress Coalition Ministry in Assam a visible and remarkable change in the political atmosphere took place. The Ministry's regime was hailed as a happy riddance from the planter's Raj. For the first time since the advent of the foreign rule in Assam people had at the head of administration men who were companions of the poor. The immediate acts of the Congress

Coalition Ministry of Assam has been left to the party leader for narration, but suffice it for me to say that there is a general and generous appreciation of what the Congress Coalition Government have done during their fourteen months stay in office.

The Ministry resigned on the 15th November 1939. On the 17th November 1939 an alternative Ministry was formed with Sir Sayed Muhammad Saadulla as premier. Verily the Governor of Assam without following the precedents of other Governors gave every facility to a minority party to form a Ministry with the hope that in time the minority will turn into a majority. Herein he has acted against the very principles of democracy and has thrown to the winds the directions of the Instrument of Instructions and the provisions of the Government of India Act 1935. Whether the present Ministry is in a majority is yet to be seen.

With the resignation of the Ministry a rigorous countryside propaganda is being carried on to bring home to the people the attitude taken by the Congress in asking the ministry to resign vis-à-vis the attitude of the Congress towards War. Directions of the All India Congress Committee in this regard is being carried out. Over 200 meetings were held for the purpose and the implications of the resolutions adopted up to date by AICC were explained by prominent Congress leaders of Assam. A War Sub-Committee was specially constituted for the purpose by the Assam PCC. Thousands of leaflets embodying the resolutions of the Working Committee were distributed among the villagers. Immediate attention will be given to the programme laid down by the Working Committee to prepare the country for the struggle ahead. In fact steps have already been taken to prepare the country for the coming struggle. The cooperation of the Assembly Legislative party will be sought in carrying out the programme.

Taking stock of the situation availing in Assam I am of definite opinion that the country is rearing its head to meet the struggle ahead.

Congress Membership in Assam

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Districts</i>	<i>Urban member</i>	<i>Rural member</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Muslim member</i>	<i>Women member</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1.	Dibrugarh DCC and Sadiya Frontier Tract with Urban	672	3,252	3,924	27	86	
2.	North Lakhimpur DCC	—	2,401	2,401	—	—	
3.	Sibsagar DCC	—	12,619	12,619	55	250	
4.	Jorhat DCC	—	7,563	7,563	—	—	
5.	Golaghat DCC	—	3,400	3,400	9	49	
6.	Nowgong DCC	—	5,000	5,000	—	—	
7.	Tezpur DCC and Balipara Frontier Tract with Urban	291	4,238	4,529	32	62	
8.	Mangaldoi DCC	—	2,000	2,000	22	16	
9.	Gauhati DCC with urban	351	3,949	4,300	141	172	
10.	Barpeta DCC with urban	200	2,200	2,400	50	20	
11.	Goalpara DCC and Garo Hills	—	4,208	4,208	51	87	

(Contd.)

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Districts</i>	<i>Urban member</i>	<i>Rural member</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Muslim member</i>	<i>Women member</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
12.	Dhubri DCC	—	3,000	3,000	87	59	
13.	Khashi and Jaintia Hills DCC with urban	850	879	1,729	6	47	
		2,364	54,709	57,073	480	848	

S. Sarma
General Secretary

Congress Membership in Assam

19 December 1939

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Districts</i>	<i>Urban member</i>	<i>Rural member</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Muslim member</i>	<i>Women member</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1.	Dibrugarh DCC and Sadiya Frontier Tract with Urban	672	3,252	3,924	27	86	
2.	*North Lakhimpur DCC	—	2,401	2,401			* Moslem and woman members not reported
3.	Sibsagar DCC	—	12,619	12,619	55	250	
4.	*Jorhat DCC	—	7,563	7,563			* Moslem and woman members not reported
5.	Golaghat DCC	—	3,400	3,400			—do—
6.	*Nowgong DCC	—		5,000	—	—	* Urban, rural, Moslem and woman members not reported
7.	Tezpur DCC and Balipara Frontier Tract with Urban	291	4,238	4,529	32	62	

(Contd.)

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Districts</i>	<i>Urban member</i>	<i>Rural member</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Muslim member</i>	<i>Women member</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
8.	Mangaldoi DCC	–	2,000	2,000	22	16	
9.	Gauhati DCC with urban	351	3,949	4,300	97	151	
10.	Barpeta DCC with urban	200	2,200	2,400	50	20	
11.	Goalpara DCC and Garo Hills	–	4,208	4,208	51	87	
12.	Dhubri DCC	–	3,000	3,000	87	59	
13.	*Khashi and Jaintia Hills DCC with urban	–		1,729			* Urban, rural, Moslem and women members not reported
		1,514	48,830	57,073	421	731	

General Secretary, APCC
19-12-39.

180. On the Kerala PCC: G. Ramachandran¹ to Rajendra Prasad,
28 December 1939

AICC Papers, File No. P-39, 1939–40, Microfilm Roll No. 8645, NMML.

8, North Avani Moola Street
Madura
Camp Calicut
28 December 1939

Revered Rajendra Babu,

It is with great reluctance that I am writing this letter to you. Fully engaged as I am with my work in connection with the Travancore struggle I am loath to appear to be putting my finger into what does not concern me directly at the present moment. Even so if I am writing this letter to you it is because if I do not do so I shall feel I shall be shirking my duty in relation to a very important thing affecting the Congress, its creed, its discipline and its present urgent policies.

I came to Calicut on Sunday the 24th instant in connection with organizing help for the Travancore struggle. Immediately I was confronted with the details of the serious situation created by the present executive of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee which is entirely in the hands of the Kerala Congress Socialist Party. Old and tried Congressmen like Mr Kelappan,² present Malabar District Board President, Mr K. Madhava Menon,³ MLC, and the President, Calicut Municipal Council, and others are in despair at what they seriously allege are gross irregularities and underhand methods adopted by the Kerala PCC Executive, in furthering the objects of the Socialist party and in undermining the creed, the present policies and directions of

the All India Congress Working Committee. The president of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee is, as you know, Mr Abdur Rahiman,⁴ who is a prominent member of the All India Executive Committee of the Forward Bloc. The General Secretary of the Committee is Mr Sankaran Nambudiripad,⁵ who is a member of the Executive Committee of the AIC Socialist Party. There is no doubt that the Socialist workers in Malabar are hard-working people who have established some contact with the masses in the district. But unfortunately all their work has been in the direction of an attitude of contempt for the present vital policies of the Congress. Systematic propaganda has been going on in favour of communism and to undermine the authority of the present Congress leadership, under Mahatma Gandhi. The entire machinery of the Congress organization is being employed to further the Socialist party purposes with the result that old and well-tried Congressmen are all one by one completely dissociating themselves from the Congress in Malabar. The allegations which have been put before me by friends like Mr Kelappan and Mr Madhava Menon etc., are, some of them, very serious if true. Let me mention some of them.

1. The constructive programme of the Congress is treated with contempt and not the slightest effort has been taken in the direction of the constructive programme. I am told that one of the reasons for the fall in the sale of Khaddar is the surreptitious (sic) propaganda against the ideology of Khaddar and the constructive programme. Even today when the Congress High Command under Gandhiji's leadership has put so much emphasis on Khaddar etc. the whole effort here is in a contrary direction.

2. The serious allegations are made in regard to the enrolment of primary Congress members in the Chirakkal⁶ and Kottayam⁷ taluks. The allegation is that the swelled number of primary members from these taluks is fraudulent and is the result of a policy to obtain large number of members for the KPCC from these taluks where Socialist propaganda has succeeded in creating allegiance to the party.

3. The policy of the Congress in regard to the present war is being used to carry on consistent and systematic propaganda on the lines of the anti-war programme of the Congress Socialist Party. Leading members of the executive of the KPCC are even travelling about the district in disguise to carry on a violent propaganda against recruitment etc. The aim is to precipitate a crisis in Malabar as early as possible in relation to the war issue.

4. Definite allegations are made that the Socialist workers surreptitiously (sic) encourage violence by villagers against landlords. The situation in regard to this particular matter, I am made to understand, has become so serious that unless, steps are taken to prevent this propaganda there might be a crisis over this item.

5. In regard to anti-war work I understand that volunteers really under the influence of the KPCC, but ostensibly functioning as labour volunteers, resorted to even picketing of the recruiting center in Cannanore.

6. Another item is the systematic exhibition of red flags at meetings and conferences in place of the National Flag.

7. Socialist members of Congress Committees are, many of them, not habitual wearers of Khaddar and in fact do open propaganda against Khadi.

8. In regard to the imminent District Board elections the attempt is to put up Socialist party candidates as distinct from Congress candidates.

It is not possible to say off-hand how much reality there is in these allegations. But they are made by such leading Congressmen that it is impossible to brush this aside. When these matters were placed before me I sent a telegram on the 24th to Babu Rajendra Prasad as follows: 'Immediate enquiry into Kerala Provincial Committee affairs absolutely necessary. Suggest immediate

appointment S. Ramanathan, Madras enquire report. Provincial Committee may be instructed that nominations district board elections be stayed till enquiry over.'

This telegram gives in substance my reactions to the allegations which I have heard in Calicut.

There is an illuminating letter published by a Congress volunteer in the *Mathrubhumi*, Calicut, of December 22, which gives an inkling into what is going on. This letter was written by Sri M. Mukundan who was a member of the certain volunteer corps organised by the local branch of the KPCC in Chirakkal village. He testifies in the letter that propaganda conducted by the volunteer crops was entirely against the spirit of the present Congress policies and that he was compelled to resign because he would not fall into line with the policy of the volunteer corps. He specially mentions that the whole effort behind is to discredit Mahatma Gandhi and the present Congress High Command and all this was being done in the name of a branch committee of the KPCC.

I therefore suggest that an enquiry be immediately held into the allegations by an impartial outsider. Unless this is done immediately the situation in Malabar will go out of hand. I have suggested the name of Sri S. Ramanathan, ex-minister of Madras, as one whose impartiality and ability to conduct the above enquiry cannot be questioned. But what is important is not the particular person but the enquiry itself. I sincerely trust that some such step would be immediately taken.

With regards
Yours sincerely,

¹ G. Ramachandran (b. 1904); one of Gandhi's most distinguished disciples; educated at Trivandrum and Santiniketan; joined the Non-Cooperation movement in 1921; engaged in constructive programme at the Sabarmati Ashram in 1925 and thereafter; taught at Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia; Joint-editor of the *Indian Express* in Madras (1944-45); elected member of the Travancore Legislative Assembly in 1947; became Minister in the first Congress cabinet in Travancore under Pattom Thanu Pillai; founded International organization called 'Fellowship of the Friends of Truti' which stood for the Gandhian ideal of equal reverence for all world religions; nominated to Rajya Sabha in 1964.

² K. Kelappan (1890-1971); educated at Tellicherry, Calicut, Madras and Bombay; left Law College, Bombay to join as a volunteer in the Non-Cooperation movement; Secretary of the Ponnani Taluk Congress Committee in 1921; arrested in the same year for conducting propaganda in favour of the Khilafat movement; arrested and imprisoned during the Quit India movement; Secretary and then President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee from 1946 onwards, he worked for the Unity of Kerala under Aikya Kerala Committee; left the Congress in 1951 and joined the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party under Acharya Kripalani; elected as a Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) and became a prominent member of the Praja Socialist Party; drawn into the Sarvodaya movement in 1957.

³ K. Madhava Menon (1897-1971); educated at Calicut, Trivandrum and Madras; resigned his job of a clerk in the Travancore Government Secretariat, Trivandrum, on Gandhi's call and joined the Congress movement in Malabar; spent seven years in various prisons in India from 1930 to 1945; Member of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, AICC and other Congress bodies for several terms; President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee for two terms; elected Councilor of the Calicut Municipality continuously from 1925 to 1942, and was its elected Chairman for three years; prominent member of the Madras Legislative Council from 1937 to 1942, and Minister of law, education and agriculture, Government of Madras, from 1947 to 1952; Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) from 1954 to 1966.

⁴ Muhammad Abdul Rehiman Saheb (1898-1945); educated at the Muhammadan College, Madras, and the Jamia Millia Islamia; left for Malabar to join the Khilafat and the Congress movements; member of the Madras Legislative Assembly in 1937; elected President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee in 1939 and member of the AICC; after the Tripuri session of the Congress, he joined the Forward Bloc and was President of its Kerala branch; arrested and detained in the Central Jail, Vellore, from 1940 to September 1945.

⁵ Elamkulam Mana Sankaran Namboodiripad (1909-99); began his political activity as a college student in Trichur; quit his studies in 1932, and entered the Disobedience Movement, for which he was jailed by the British. In jail, he came in contact with Krishna Pillai, A.K. Gopalan, and K.P.R. Gopalan and was converted to Marxism. When the Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934, he became one of the Joint Secretaries; was also Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. In 1939 was elected, unopposed, to the Madras Legislative Assembly on a Congress ticket, and during that year was also a member of the AICC. Although he was probably a secret member earlier, he openly joined the CPI in 1940 and brought the majority of the Kerala members of the Congress Socialist Party with him. In 1947, after a brief detention, went underground, and during this period unsuccessfully contested the 1952 elections; elected to the

Central Committee of the CPI in 1943; is one of the two persons to have served on that body continuously until his death; member of the Polit-bureau since 1950; author of innumerable articles and pamphlets on a broad variety of topics, but especially on the agrarian question; also one of the CPI's leading Marxist theoreticians. In 1957, when the Communist government was formed in Kerala State, he became the first Communist Chief Minister in India.

⁶ Northern-most taluk of the Malabar district with Cannonore at its seaport.

⁷ Headquarters of the taluk in Travancore district and a center of Syrian Christians.

181. All India Congress Committee

AICC Papers, P-1/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8642, NMML.

*Swaraj Bhawan
Allahabad*

29 December 1939

Circular No. 28

P-1/2685

All Provincial Congress Committees

Dear Friend,

I forwarded to you from Wardha the two resolutions passed by the last meeting of the Working Committee dealing with the Political Situation and the Independence Day. These two resolutions must be read together. They state the Congress position with reference to the British government and the communal question raised by it. They also lay down for Congressmen and Congress Committees the programme that is to be followed in the immediate future to prepare the country for the struggle ahead. It is needless to remind you that non-cooperation between the Congress and the British Government has already commenced. It began with the resignation of Congress ministries. This resignation is the first step towards preparation for Civil Resistance. The rest of the programme is laid down in the two resolutions already referred to. It is essential that this programme be worked out as speedily as possible.

For the successful working of the programme I would suggest the establishment in the Provincial office of departments dealing with separate items. Each department may be placed in charge of an officer or a small Committee that can easily meet from time to time.

The following Departments may be formed with advantage:

1. Publicity Department:

The department should periodically publish pamphlets and leaflets explaining the present political situation with special reference to the various resolutions passed by the Working Committee and the AICC since the outbreak of war in Europe. The demand for the Constituent Assembly must be popularized and explained especially with reference to the minority problem. Extensive tours of local leaders must be organized. All India leaders must be invited to go round the province. The head office will give all possible help in getting members of the Working Committee and other leaders to give time for this purpose.

2. Minority Department

It must explain through the publicity department the efforts made by the Congress towards the solution of the minority problem with special reference to Muslims. How efforts in the past have failed in spite of the Congress will to agree; the part played by the Communal decisions of the British Government introducing separate electorates with its permanent communal majorities and minorities. Now that agreement by means of pacts and conferences is despaired of, we propose to solve the question by means of the Constituent Assembly.

It may be necessary to have this department under a small Committee. This Committee must consist of representatives from two principal minorities, Muslims, Christians and where necessary Sikhs, Parsees, Anglo-Indians and domiciled communities. It must be clearly brought out that Congressmen seek to bring about better relations with minorities by personal contacts and good will and neighbourly service.

3. Harijan Department

If there is any one group of people whom we have kept down through the centuries and upon whom we have heaped injustice and indignity it is our Harijan brothers. Whatever is done towards ameliorating their condition is but a partial repatriation of a great and grievous wrong. Their social, economic and political needs must be looked after. Efforts must be made to see that a fair number of them as also of members of the minorities are elected in local bodies and to offices and committees in the Congress organization.

4. Charkha Department

For this department too a small Committee will facilitate work. The Committee must have among its members the agents and Secretaries or heads of Provincial branches of the Charkha Sangh. The work of the Committee will be to provide facilities to intending spinners, making available at reasonable cost and funds permitting without cost of the poor villager all instruments required by the different processes of carding, making slivers and spinning. The Committee must also facilitate the supply of cotton where necessary. It must make provision for instruction. Facilities must be provided for the collection of yarn produced, selling it or turning it into cloth. With the cooperation of the local branch of the Spinners' Association it must also work for the popularization of Khadi and the disposal of the old and the new stocks. For all this it will be necessary that the Committee should have some funds. A grant from the PCC funds will not be enough for this work. The Committee must therefore take upon itself the task of collecting funds for the purpose.

Other departments or Committees that may be necessary for our preparation may be added. The Head Office will be happy to afford all assistance in the carrying out of the programme. Cooperation of the Congress Legislative party and its leaders must also be obtained for all this work. In the districts too suitable machinery must be created to carry on the work.

The Central Office must be kept informed about the machinery created for the carrying out of the programme of preparation. We must also get monthly if not fortnightly reports of the work done.

Yours sincerely,
General Secretary

[Enclosure 1]

PS
I am sending you herewith copy of the letter I have addressed to the Leader of the Congress Party in the Legislatures.

[Enclosure]

Ref. P.L.1/2687

December 29, 1939

All the Leaders of Congress Legislative Parties

Dear Friend,

I am sending you herewith copies of the two resolutions passed by the last meeting of the Working Committee at Wardha and the circular that I have issued this day to the Provincial

Congress Committees. These papers will give you an idea of the preparation that the Working Committee want the country to make before a campaign of Civil Resistance can be commenced. You divested yourself of the onerous duties and responsibilities of your office as the first step towards non-cooperation. You and your colleagues, I am sure, must be impatient for the next step in our programme. The preparation for the starting of Civil Resistance is the next step that the Working Committee under the guidance of Gandhiji has kept before the country. For this a programme is chalked out. Your help and that of your party is essential in the successful carrying out of this programme.

May I therefore request you to call a meeting of your party to discuss ways and means to carry out the programme in cooperation with the Provincial Congress Committees?

The Bombay Congress Legislative Party recently met in Bombay for the purpose. You may send for the proceedings of this meeting. They may be helpful to you in your deliberations. Our office will be happy to render all possible assistance.

Yours sincerely,
General Secretary

182. All India Congress Committee

AICC Papers, P-1/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8642, NMML.

*Swaraj Bhawan
Allahabad*

Circular No. 29
P-1/2706

30 December 1939

All Provincial Congress Committees

Dear Friend,

The last meeting of the Working Committee was approached by the UP Provincial Congress Committee with a request to drop the delegates' elections this year in view of the preparations that were already on in the country for the coming struggle. For various reasons the Committee did not find it possible to accede to this suggestion. They, however, hoped that least possible time and energy of Congressmen and Congress Committees will be diverted to this necessary work.

The Committee was pleased to note that as soon as a possibility of a struggle appeared on the horizon all differences political and personal were forgotten and Congress men and women presented a united front. The Committee have no doubt that this good will and unity will not be disturbed by the coming elections. To ensure a calm atmosphere efforts should be made to secure as far as possible unanimous elections by common agreement. Whenever and wherever contested elections cannot be avoided Congress offices and those in charge of the elections will be greatly helping the national preparations for the coming fight, if they scrupulously avoid taking sides. We may also not forget that it is the duty of every Congressman to see that members of the minority communities and our Harijan brothers are allowed facilities to be returned in sufficient numbers in the elections.

Usually at the time of elections this office receives many complaints about irregularities and injustice. At this juncture we could request all parties, groups and individuals to see that all disputes are amicably settled locally. The presence of the Election Tribunals should make reference to this office unnecessary. No money need be wasted on telegrams and telephone calls.

Every effort must be made to see that the atmosphere of unity, goodwill and enthusiasm that pervades the country at this juncture, is disturbed as little as possible, and most of our attention is

directed to the preparations which I hope have already begun in your province. We may not allow petty personal jealousies and rivalries to stand in the way of our just and noble cause.

I am sending you herewith a resolution that was recently passed by the UP Provincial Congress Committee in order to ensure the smooth running of the next elections.

Yours sincerely,
General Secretary

[Enclosure: 1]

The following resolution has been passed by the Council of the UP Provincial Congress Committee:

‘The Council draws the attention of the Congressmen of the Province to the present political situation and appeals to them to prepare for the coming national struggle according to the directions of the Congress Working Committee and give effect to the decisions of the Working Committee and this Council at as early a date as possible. The Council desires every Congress worker to realize that this great undertaking can only succeed when we forget our mutual difference and, rising above party politics, cooperate with one another for the fulfillment of our immediate objective.

With this end in view the Council had recommended to the Working Committee to postpone the elections, but taking into consideration the situation in the whole country the Working Committee could not accept our suggestion. It is natural for internal differences to increase at the time of elections. We, therefore, wish to emphasize that the workers of the province should act with restraint and tact in this matter and, as far as possible, hold the elections by mutual consent and understanding.

We are faced with an extraordinary situation today and, at this hour, the test of patriotism is not rivalry for high offices but a sincere and energetic effort to carry out the national programme and prepare for participation in the forthcoming struggle. In the last three months we have succeeded to a very great extent in sinking our differences and have learnt to cooperate fully with one another in the achievement of our objective. The Council congratulates the Congressmen of the province on this and, at the same time, appeals to them to protect and maintain the present clean atmosphere.

The Council further appeals to the Congress workers that they should give full consideration to the representation of the minority communities while electing delegates. Congress is the only organization representative of all communities and at this time, when the opponents of communal unity and nationalism are trying to mislead the masses by questioning this claim of ours, it becomes our special duty and concern to remain true to our ideals.’

183.(a) The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee:

E.M.S. Namboodripad to Rajendra Prasad, 31 December 1939
(On Aided School Teachers)

Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 4M/49, NAI. Also AICC Papers, File No. P-12 (Part-I), 1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8643, NMML.

Calicut
31 December 1939

Dear Friend,

Your letter dated December 23, 1939.

The Aided School Teachers of Malabar are groaning under various disabilities. Inhumanly miserable pay, irregular payment of even this, absence of any security with extreme liability of

being dismissed at any moment at the whim and fancy of the manager etc. are their main grievances for the last three years. They have been organizing themselves into an All-Malabar Aided School Teachers' Union and trying to get their grievances redressed. The PCC and other Congress Committees and Congressmen in general have been supporting them. All Committees have, at their various sittings, tackled this problem in different ways. The teachers have, of late, grown more and more dissatisfied since none of their grievances has been redressed and since the departmental authorities are trying to suppress the Teachers' Movement. This dissatisfaction expressed itself in attempt at strikes. Last year, it even threatened to break out into a strike when Congress Ministry was functioning but we could avert it. Recently, particularly after the resignation of the Congress Ministry, the authorities have become more aggressive. This reacted on the teachers as a tendency again to resort to Direct Action and they have declared a strike beginning January 10 onwards. Attempts are being made to persuade them to give up the idea. Meanwhile, a number of arrests have been made and the Teaching Certificates of several teachers have been suspended or cancelled for participation in other forms of Direct Action than strikes. This is the exact position so far as the teachers are concerned.

The PCC and other Congress Committees have supported this movement as a whole. But they have not encouraged them to resort to Direct Action.

So far as Labour is concerned, certain strikes have taken place. If strikes, on the basis of Trade Union demands are to be taken as Direct Action, they are resorting to Direct Action. Apart from that, at Cannanore, when the Recruitment Officer was camping and recruiting soldiers, 6 or 7 labourers went there and picketed. They are arrested for encroachment on military grounds and are serving their term of imprisonment. In none of these things has any Congress Committee any hand except the fact that some of them tried to settle the labour strikes.

I hope this account of things will be of use to you for forming a judgment.

Yours sincerely,
Secretary

183.(b) The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee:

E.M.S. Namboodripad to Rajendra Prasad, 31 December 1939
(On District Board Affairs)

Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 4M/49, NAI. Also AICC Papers, File No. P-12 (Part-I), 1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8643, NMML.

Dear Friend,

I am sorry that I could not submit to you a detailed report on the District Board affairs in answer to representations and complaints made to you earlier since I was on tour.

There are 52 seats in the District Board including 7 Muslim, 2 Harijan, 2 women and 1 European Reserved Seats. Out of these, selections had already been made and announced for 33 seats even before your telegram dated December 29 was received here. Further selections were made last night and it is expected that Congress will contest 46 or 47 seats, including 6 Muslim, 2 Harijan and 2 Women Reserved Seats. We expect that at least 40 out of these will come out successful. The reason mentioned in the representation made to you that Congress should not contest District Board Elections, is therefore, in our view, entirely erroneous.

I must, however, explain that the most unhelpful attitude taken by those who made representations to you is creating difficulties in our way. A section of Congressmen (having constituted themselves in a political party called Kerala Congress Gandhi Sangham) are working

within the Congress trying to replace the present office-bearers of the PCC by themselves. They are taking a very obstructive attitude having resolved to keep aloof from the District Board Elections on very flimsy grounds. If unverified reports being received here are correct, they are going a step further and trying to dissuade those who have been nominated from filing nominations on the Day of Nomination. Reports are also coming in that they are indirectly encouraging anti-Congress elements. As I said before, these are unverified reports. The fact, however, stands out that the very attitude adopted by them and the wide publicity given to it have encouraged anti-Congress elements. And this will have its repercussions on the election. But it is our definite feeling that the Congress, inspite of all this, has a fair chance of an over-whelming success at the polls.

I do not know what exactly you mean by the expression 'many of the office-bearers of the Congress Committee'. If office-bearers of the Congress Committee means those of the PCC, it is only its President, Shri Mohammad Abdur Rahiman who is a candidate. Many office-bearers of lower committees are, of course, standing as Congress candidates. But then, it is not the practice in this province, as you have stated that it is in some provinces, not to set up office-bearers of Congress Committees. During the previous elections to the District Board and Municipalities, they were adopted as candidates. Many of those who make complaints against us now are those who, in 1937, were both office-bearers and candidates, including Sri Madhava Menon, the present Chairman of the Calicut Municipality who was in 1937 the Secretary of the PCC, and was even when holding that office, selected as Congress candidate to the municipality. This complaint, therefore, has no *bona-fide* behind it.

The third complaint is that we have ignored the District and Town Committees in the matter of selecting candidates. It is not correct. We took almost a fortnight after receiving applications for selection of candidates to make the actual selection and in the meanwhile held informal consultations with local Congressmen in every taluk. We did not, of course, consult those who declared in the press that they had nothing to do with this election and that for obvious reasons. But we did consult local Congressmen and I think the selections we have made are the fairest possible, under the present circumstances.

I also feel that if the suggestion of non-participation in elections was acted upon, it would have been a grave political blunder since this election campaign would be the best means of popularizing the Congress programme of Constituent Assembly etc.

Yours sincerely,
Secretary

184. The Year's Work, 1939

Annual Report of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, Published by the General Secretary, Andhra Pradesh Provincial Congress Committee, Masulipatnam, 1940.

The year under report begins with the last statutory annual meeting of the new delegates and the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee for the year 1939-40. Two hundred and ten out of the two hundred and twenty five delegates elected to the 52nd Indian National Congress to be held at Tripuri assembled at Coconada on the 29th January 1939. After finishing the items on the agenda viz., election of the Congress President and the members for the new all India Congress Committee, the delegates met as the members of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee for the year 1939. Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Sri G. Brahmayya¹ were reelected President and General Secretary respectively, by the unanimous vote of the House. Sri K. Koti Reddi² was likewise reelected Vice-President. Sris K. Venkata Rao³ and N. Sanjeeva Reddy⁴ were elected Joint Secretaries. The New Working Committee was then constituted.

II. Local Boards

Sri K. Venkata Rao one of the Joint Secretaries has since been in charge of the Local Boards' Portfolio. Ten District Boards out of the 11 in the Andhra Province and 18 Municipalities out of 25 are Congress-manned. While Congress influence is fairly effective in respect of the District Boards, one may not say the same of Municipalities, which shows that the attraction and attachment of the rural population to the Congress are stronger and perhaps even purer than of the urban. As the sphere of interest and activity widens out from the Panchayat to the Municipality, from the Municipality to the District Board, then to the Provincial Legislatures and finally to the All-India Central Bodies, one feels with justifiable pride not only that the people at large have received intensive political education but have learnt to cultivate a broad outlook and an extensive vision. The same voter who is pronouncedly partisan and even factious in local matters is patriotic to a degree and acts disinterestedly as the field expands.

There have been a few bye-elections and the Congress has secured them all. In two district Boards namely Nellore and East Godavary there were general elections and the Congress has an overwhelming majority, 49/52 and 42/52 respectively as also in one Municipality—Palacole, where all the 16 members were Congressmen. We are glad to state that the ten Congress District Boards have annexed the Kistna District Board as well thus completing our capture of District Boards throughout the Andhra Desa.

The provincial Working Committee has taken a heavy responsibility on itself in overhauling the personnel of the Boards in the year's elections and it is a matter for gratification that the tone of morals in them has markedly been elevated. We may not claim more, for it takes time to clean the Aegean's stable of Local Self-Government and our Provincial Congress Committee has not shared the opinions of those amongst certain high-placed Congressmen who stand miles aloof from the Local Bodies. The fact really is that you cannot ford this ditch without dipping your feet in its mire. Once you capture the Ministries it becomes your obvious duty to get control over subordinate quasi-Governmental institutions such as the Local Bodies and the University Senate.

III. Election to the Vice-Chancellorship of the Andhra University

Accordingly the Provincial Congress Committee has added to its programme the contest of seats to the Andhra University Senate. As a logical consequence of its decision to contest these seats, the PCC resolved also to contest the Vice-Chancellorship of the Andhra University. Sri K. Koti Reddi, Bar-at-Law, MLA, Vice-President of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee was set up as a candidate in this behalf. His name happened to be put up rather late and yet his defeat was a narrow one, the difference between the two contestants being but 7 votes. It is perhaps irrelevant to go into the causes that contributed to this defeat. Suffice it to say, however, that this defeat proved to the hilt that the cult of the Congress has not made much headway amongst the English-educated folk of the country, particularly those with vested interests. The towns are still the bulwarks of British Rule.

IV. Congress Election

The Delegates' elections for Tripuri were conducted in an atmosphere far calmer than in the previous year. There have been fewer appeals and the election Sub-Committee appointed by the Executive as per instructions from the All India Congress Committee had dealt with them all.

V. Membership

1. Congress membership for 1939 has decreased as compared with previous year's figures. The table herein below gives the membership figures for 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1939. Ever since 1937

the problem of corruption in enrolment has come to the front. Six Inspectors were appointed to inspect the membership of the various district Committees. These inspectors had submitted their reports and the Executive disqualified membership aggregating to 10,422 on the basis of these reports on the grounds that this membership was not enrolled as per the provisions of the All India and Provincial Constitutions.

2. The case of West Kistna stands apart from the aforesaid figures. A full account is given in the communication to the All India Congress Committee (Vide Appendix I). There were two parties amongst the West Kistna District Congressmen; one, the party in power and the other, in opposition. A number of times trouble cropped up in issuing primary membership forms to the party opposite. Ultimately the Provincial Congress Committee had to interfere and issue the membership forms to the other party. Each party had enrolled thousands of members. A circular issued from the PCC office required all District Congress Committees to send all membership lists and the PCC quota of money within a prescribed time as well as to bank the moneys with the District Congress Committees. The party in power failed to do the latter. The lists were given; but the money was not banked. In the end the whole dispute resolved itself into one centring round the banking of the Congress money lying with the West Kistna District Congress Committee.

In spite of repeated requests from the President, the PC Executive Committee and again from the President from Wardha under directions from the All India Congress Working Committee, the District Congress Committee executive declined to pay the amount into a bank. Later the money was banked in the name of Sri Subhas Chandra Bose, President AICC and the Working Committee of the AICC authorized the President, APCC to take such action as he deemed fit after the transfer of the money to his name. This was not done. Nevertheless, the elections of the delegates to the Tripuri Congress from the West Kistna District were, after they had actually taken place, held up by postponing declaration, till the 23rd January 1939 in the hope that though the money was not transferred to the APCC's account, the books, at least, would be placed at the Provincial Congress Committee President's disposal for scrutiny of membership by Inspectors as in the case of other districts. In the other wing of West Kistna itself 6,000 members had been cancelled as the result of such inspection, but the persistent refusal of the President of West Kistna district Congress Committee to furnish the books left no alternative but to declare the election of delegates by the remaining members of the West Kistna District, and the President, APCC was in the end compelled as a last resort to disqualify the entire membership concerned under instructions from the All India Congress Working Committee. It was unfortunate that the legitimate members enrolled could not be saved from the drastic action and therefore ample opportunity was given them to reenroll themselves without the necessity of having to pay the fee of four annas once again. Sixteen centers were opened for the purpose but only about seven hundred members availed themselves of this opportunity as there was picketing against such a course. As a protest some 49 members of the West Kistna DCC resigned their elective membership and the President, APCC was therefore obliged to send a special officer to take charge of the office and its assets and asked the remaining 46 members of the DCC to elect fresh office-bearers. No accounts were handed over, nor the motor car of the DCC but a bundle of old papers was given. To this date one does not know what happened to the motor car. The Provincial Executive demanded explanation from the District Executive for their act of indiscipline and in the absence of any, the Provincial Executive had to take disciplinary action against the then President and Secretary of the DCC.

ii. This painful episode did not end there. Even the All India Congress Working Committee's resolutions were not respected; and its advice went unheeded. After the Tripuri session of the Congress and its sequels, the General Secretary of the AICC wrote to Sri Subhas Babu to transfer the aforesaid funds lying in his name as President, AICC in the Bezwada Branch of the Andhra

Bank to the name of his successor and the request was later repeated by the new president himself. Not only were these requests not answered but the Bank was served a notice by Sri Subhas Babu not to pay the money to Sri Rajendra Babu. Later, another notice was served by Sri Subhas Babu on the Bank to pay it back to the person who had remitted it originally to the Bank. The money has since been transferred to the name of Rajendra Babu as President, All India Congress Committee and now a suit is threatened by Sri A. Anjayya the depositor against the Bank.

[The Table referred to in V-(1) is given separately]

VI. Revision of the Madras Estates Land Act

i. The Magnum Opus of the year 1938 was the leading of evidence before the Prakasam Committee. Even before the publication of Government Committee's report in 1939 the case of the Zamindari ryot as visualized by the Andhra provincial Congress Committee had been presented to the public in a compendious form covering 175 pages in English by Sri R. Mandeswara Sarma which has been bodily incorporated in the Government report.

ii. This committee for the Revision of the Madras Estates Land Act under the Chairmanship of Sri T. Prakasam prepared an encyclopaedia report covering all the aspects of the zamindari system, after sifting enquiry lasting over eighteen months. The report as published by the Government is too huge and voluminous and too full of details for the ordinary ryot population so the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee decided to popularize the report and bring within the knowledge of the ryot population the recommendations of the Prakasam Committee and to this end published a broad summary of the recommendations and the draft Act rendered into readable Telugu covering 220 pages, by Sri K. Sathakopachari, Advocate Coconada and made available to the public at a price of 0-4-0 a copy which compares favourably with the prohibitive price of Rs 60 of the original Government report in English. This has helped to popularize the Prakasam Committee Report widely. The AICC on behalf of the province and the zamindari ryots thank Sri Prakasam and express their sense of gratitude for the laborious work he has undertaken and accomplished. It is a pity that although the Report itself was accepted by both Houses of the Legislature no Bill could have been published by the Ministry by the time of their resignations.

VII. Agrarian and Industrial Troubles

i. Kalipatnam: This province has naturally had its own share of Kisan and labour troubles. The zamindari system prevails extensively in the Andhra Districts and while the zirayati ryots who are direct tenants under Government have their numerous complaints, the zamindari ryots find their lot in life aggravated by additional agrarian complications. It is now well known how the Kalipatnam struggle forced itself on the attention of Mahatma Gandhi who made a reference to it in *Harijan*. The ryots of Kalipatnam were induced to offer 'Civil' Disobedience which was far from Satyagraha by a group of young men in West Godavary. These friends had wired to the President during Tripuri session requesting permission to offer Satyagraha. The President wired back saying that it was impossible to discuss the matter at that distance and undertaking to consider the question immediately after his returning to headquarters. The Provincial Congress Committee Executive met at Tripuri and offered like advice. The ryots and workers impatiently transgressed the Law and were proceeded against by the Magistracy. Among them were some ladies. Sri Prakasam, the Revenue Minister, paid a visit to the place soon after the session of the Congress and secured the release of those in custody. The Collector of West Godavary was directed to make an enquiry into the claims of the ryots. Nothing is known of the result but the disputes between the zamindar and the ryot continue. Earnest efforts were made by the President of the APCC to effect a compromise

between the contending parties but without any tangible results. It is not necessary to discuss the reasons for the failure.

ii. Munagala: Munagala Estate trouble is sufficiently important to demand a chapter by itself, if not a separate report. Anyway the history of the case as well as the result of the endeavours of the Provincial Congress Committee have been given in a nutshell in a report attached hereto (Appendix II). The settlement effect through the intervention of the PCC would have been a feather in its cap, if the conditions thereof had been loyally carried out in full by the Zamindar. Even so the success that has attended the labours of the General Secretary, the Office Secretary and notably of Sri Erneni Subrahmanyam of the Komaravol Asram should be enough to encourage the Provincial Congress Committee in undertaking the task of reconciliation on a wider scale.

2. Chittivalasa Firing: Chittivalasa Firing in the Vizagapatnam District can be compared only to that indulged in by the Police at Chirala, Guntur District in 1938. Immediately on receipt of the information regarding the firing, our General Secretary sent our Office-Secretary to Chittivalasa to obtain first-hand information about the whole situation. The Madras Government also appointed a Committee of enquiry to report on the firing. It was composed of a member of the Board of Revenue, the Commissioner for Labour, and Inspector General of Police. The Committee submitted a report which for reasons known only to Government did not see the light of day. But we must be thankful even for the small mercies that flow from Government. The Collector of the district was transferred from Vizagapatnam to mark Government's displeasure at his conduct.

VIII. Propaganda

With a view to carrying on Congress Propaganda in the districts the Working Committee of the PCC decided to help the District Congress Committees to appoint Organizers, the PCC agreeing to pay half the salary of the Organizer's salary. Only a few DCCs have availed themselves of the opportunity afforded by the Provincial Congress Committee. Some District Congress Committees appointed organizers on a comparatively high salary and frustrated the very object of the resolution passed by the APCC so much so that it had to modify the original resolution, and limit its contribution to an amount not exceeding Twenty rupees p.m. In the year under report, organizers were working in the districts of North Vizagapatnam, East Godavary, Guntur, Nellore and Chittoor. There is no doubt that useful work is being turned out by them. All the Congress work and the purpose of our many publications, will be frustrated if the District Congress Committees and Taluk Congress Committees will not function energetically and efficiently.

IX. Essay on Nonviolence

The Executive of the APCC passed a resolution in Venkatagiri on 12-8-38 offering a prize of about two hundred rupees to the best thesis on the evolution of the cult of nonviolence in Indian civilization and Indian culture. The amount of the prize was enhanced later to Rs 300 and the last date for the submission of the thesis was extended to July 31, 1939. Several candidates entered the competition. A Sub-Committee consisting of Sri Dr B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Sri Mutnuri Krishnarao and Sri G. Harisarvothama Rao was constituted to examine the theses of the several candidates. None of them was found to be up to the required standard of merit. Yet the productions were passable as a first venture in this new field and the thesis of Sri K. Satakopachari, Vakil, Coconada, was declared to hold the first place and half the prize amount was awarded to the author. The selected thesis is being printed at the cost of the APCC.

X. Peace Brigade

It may be remembered that the Hindustan Seva Dal represented the volunteer organization of the Congress and was admitted as a body affiliated to the Congress. This organization was however

not revived after the termination of the Civil Disobedience Movement and in the year 1939, after the release of the bulk of the detainees and political prisoners convicted of violence. Mahatma Gandhi pleaded for the formation of a Peace Brigade or Santhi Sainya. The APCC has taken up this item and to organize a Peace Brigade in Andhra Desa a sub-committee consisting of Sris G. Harisarvothama Rao, M. Chitti and M. Venkata Raju was constituted. Sri K. Dayanandaraju was asked to look after the training of the volunteers. It was decided to run the training center at Amaravati a place hereby with age and sanctified by ancient traditions. The sub-committee was entrusted with the task of collecting the necessary funds and the materials and the District Congress Committees were exhorted to cooperate by sending duly qualified and competent youths, to undergo training in this center. Sri Harisarvothama Rao has prepared a draft curriculum for the training center, which should have commenced work in September last. The outbreak of the war and the severe rains of last year upset this programme; and it is hoped that ere long this camp will be opened.

XI. Office Administration

It will be readily admitted that if the Congress organization should function, its administration must be correct. Frequent auditing of the subordinate Congress Committees by auditors, has therefore necessitated the augmenting of the office-staff by the appointment of an Accountant, who could look after the work connected with the audit of subordinate Committees. Accordingly an Accountant has been appointed besides an additional auditor.

XII. Election Tribunal

A political organization lives from election to election and nearly 15,000 elected seats are annually contested in Andhradesa. These necessitated a large number of appeals; and the bulk of the time, energy and attention of the office-bearers in the last two years, was absorbed by these appeals. Moreover, however conscientiously these appeals might have been disposed of, the complaint was apt to be made, that the personal equation of the judges who were members of the Executive would vitiate the impartiality of their verdict. Accordingly impartial Election Tribunals were required to be organised and in pursuance of the changed constitution of the Indian National Congress as amended at the meeting of the All India Congress Committee in Bombay an Election Tribunal of three independent persons who have no intention of contesting any elective office connected with the Congress were selected as members of the Tribunal. The names of the members of the Tribunal are Sri K. Anjaneyulu (Convener), Sri V. Yajnanarayana and Sri V. Rajagopal Rao. The office of the Tribunal is situated at Tenali. This Tribunal is carrying on its work uninfluenced by any considerations other than of equity and justice. They have framed their own rules for the conduct of their business and have, in accordance with the constitution appointed District Tribunals for each of the Districts.

XIII. Constitution Revision

The constitution of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee was changed in the light of the alterations made in the constitution of the Indian National Congress and has been duly approved of by the Working Committee of the All India Congress Committee.

XIV. July 9, 1939 Demonstrations

It will be remembered that in June 1939, there was held a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in Bombay at which two important resolutions were passed. One was to the effect that no Congressman may offer or organize any form of Satyagraha in the Administrative Provinces of

India without the previous sanction of the Provincial Congress Committees concerned. The other resolution was to the effect that the PCCs should not interfere with the discretion of the Ministry in administrative matters, but that it is always open to the executive of the PCC to draw the attention of the Government privately to any particular abuse or difficulty. In matters of policy if there is a difference between the Ministry and the PCC reference should be made to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee. Public discussion in such matters should be avoided. Besides this there were certain changes in the constitution of the Congress. The proceedings of the AICC particularly the former two caused certain irritation among and dissent from a body of younger men who had organised demonstrations on the 9th of July 1939 protesting against aforesaid resolutions. We have had our quota in this Province of friends who chose to disobey the instructions of the President, Indian National Congress prohibiting the observance of anti-AICC resolutions day on July 9, 1939. Notices were duly served on all who were alleged to have participated in the demonstrations of July 9, 1939 and action was taken against them after obtaining a statement from them confirming the truth of the allegations. Disciplinary action was taken against 15 persons in all in the province; while one expressed regret and therefore no action was taken against him.

XV. Conference of Chairmen of Municipal Councils and Presidents of District Boards

On August 20, 1939 a Conference of Chairman of Municipal Councils and Presidents of District Boards was convened in Sri Bagh, Mylapore, Madras. Five Chairmen of Municipal Councils and Presidents of seven District Boards attended the Conference. The Hon'ble B. Gopalareddi, then Minister for Local Self-Government was good enough to be present on the occasion. The Presidents of District Boards and Chairmen of Municipal Councils emphasized the difficulties and embarrassments arising from certain circulars and GOs, which stood in the way of their implementing the Congress programme in respect of Khaddar, rural reconstruction and of appointing political sufferers. The Conference arrived at certain tentative conclusions. Sri Gopalareddi explained the difficulties that prevent the Government from making any change in the existing GOs and circulars. A copy of the proceedings and the representation to Government is appended to the report, as Appendix III.

XVI. Andhra Mahasabha and Andhra Province

The 27th Andhra Mahasabha Conference took place on the 27th and 28th of August 1939 at Guntur under the presidency of Sri M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar MLA (Central). The Conference passed a resolution delivering an ultimatum to the Congress Government that unless a separate province was carved out for Andhra Desa within six months they would resort to Satyagraha. This resolution became the cause for certain resentment on the part of law-abiding Congressmen against the movers of the resolution. The standing Committee of the Andhra Mahasabha was asked by the executive committee of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee to alter the resolution so far as this threat was concerned.

The proceedings of the Guntur session of the Andhra Mahasabha only indicated the general discontent prevailing in Andhra desa over the fact that the Secretary of State for India had turned down the recommendation of the Madras Government to carve out the Andhra Province. It is matter now within general knowledge that the Madras Government sent three or four communications to the Secretary of State for India pressing for the formation of the Andhra province and that the Secretary of State, time after time, turned down the proposal. It is not difficult to understand the reasons that prompted the Secretary of State to take such a view. For, the Andhra Province when separated would only add to the number of Congress Provinces which

have successfully embarrassed the British Government by their resignations, at a psychological moment. Obviously the British Government would 'not' voluntarily add to their embarrassments. This was emphasized by the President, APCC at the beginning of 1939 when the Under-Secretary of State for India in answer to a question by Mr Carey, stated that it was the considered view of the Government that the multiplication of the number of the provinces in the country, would not be in the interest of India. If therefore, the Andhras have not obtained their province, it is no doubt due to their sincere patriotism, and the fear that they have inspired in the mind of British Government, that their province will be purely a Congress province.

XVII. PCC and the Ministry

The relation between the Provincial Congress Committee and the Ministry of the province have been all along cordial. The PCC has not failed to realize how it has suffered in one sense from the exaggerated notions that the public entertained of its capacity for influencing the judgment of the Ministers in contrast with the somewhat perfunctory treatment which it had received from the Ministers. The fact must however be admitted that the Provincial Congress Committees were expecting too much from the Ministers and the Ministers were giving too little to the PCCs. In such a position it is a matter for gratification that the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee has put forward its earnest effort in order to hold the balance even between the two positions. The PCC at time felt that even the members of the Legislature Congress Party were not being given their legitimate importance in being consulted before-hand in respect of the promulgation of new laws. Accordingly the Executive Committee of the PCC passed a resolution on 28.5.39 requesting the Madras ministry to appraise the members of the Madras Legislature Congress Party of any impending legislation well in time.

We must in this connection state that individual Congressmen holding fairly high positions in the hierarchy of Congress organizations, have under a mistaken notion of their serviceability to the public, given occasion for adverse criticism on the ground that they were interfering too much with the administration to the point of meddlesomeness and when the Executive Committee was overborne with the correctness of this criticism it had to take steps in order to check such an abuse of opportunities and passed the following resolution at Palacole on 2.10.39.

'On a review of the happenings in the past two and half years of Congress Government and the interest taken therein by various Congressmen, this Committee feels that while it is the legitimate right as well as duty of all Congressmen to afford the widest measure of help and information for the guidance of Congress Ministers as well as officers, there are not wanting instances of excessive zeal and interest which have served to embarrass the ministers and the officers on the one hand and which have perhaps on the other gone beyond the limits of permissibility.

'Accordingly, this Committee implores all Congressmen to minimize their interference, so as to avoid the accusation of meddlesomeness and in no case approach any Judicial or Police officers in respect of cases under their enquiry or trial not only because of the impropriety of such acts but also lest any complaints legitimately lying against them be weakened by counter charges of undue influencing of officers by Congressmen.

'Further, the Committee resolves that every case of enquiry, recommendation, communication or interference otherwise be intimated to the Provincial office forthwith by all Congress friends, including office-bearers of the PCC, DCC, Town, Taluq and other Congress Committees and members of Legislatures so that a healthy restraint may automatically be exercised in all such matters.

'Whenever necessary the information will be communicated to the DCCs'.

XVIII. A. Interim Elections

Consequent on the death of Sri K. Venkata Reddi representing the Narasaraopet constituency his seat in the Lower House of the Madras Legislature fell vacant. After calling for applications from the candidates in the District, the Working Committee selected Sri K. Ramkotewara Rao, an ardent Congressman, and journalist as the Congress candidate. The bye-election synchronized with the introduction of the much criticized Sales Tax and the Tobacco Tax. The merchants were as a class up in arms against the new taxes. The bye-election showed which way the wind blew. The generality of the voters who were most affected by these taxes voted in favour of the Congress and proved that the hold of the Congress on the hearts of the masses was unfaltering.

XIX. Congress and War

On the question of the war that is now raging in Europe, the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee wholly endorsed the resolution passed by the All India Congress Working Committee at Wardha on the 14th of September and affirmed its full faith in the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. When later, the Madras Congress Ministry in pursuance of the mandate of the All-India Parliamentary Sub-Committee resigned, the entire Province has expressed its approval of the step taken by the Ministers which really helped to enhance the prestige of the Congress as well as that of the country.

XX. Congress Membership

This year the primary membership of the Congress stands at 2,07,000 and has fallen by about a lac, as compared with the figures for 1938. Permanent Registers are being maintained by the subordinate committees. The three-years' continuous membership rules have been enforced this year and only 52 exemptions have been given.

XXI. 18th Andhra Provincial Conference

The 18th Andhra Provincial Conference which was invited to Madras took place at Ellore on the 9th and 10th of January under the Presidency of Sri T. Prakasam, formerly Revenue Minister to the Government of Madras. The conference was significant for the reason that there was only one composite resolution tabled on the occasion which expressed complete confidence in the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, approved of the Working Committee's resolutions basing the whole scheme of fight upon the central factor of the Congress organization, viz., the constructive programme. The younger friends in the province expressed their dissent from the cult of khaddar and village industries and seriously objected to the constructive programme being named as really non-violence in action. Nevertheless the resolution was passed *nem con.*

The second resolution reaffirmed its demand for the Andhra Province and deplored the attitude of the Secretary of State in the face of the demand having received the support of the Madras Ministry.

The melancholy events connected with the Madras exhibition, the enormous damage extending to about Rs 22,000 caused to the Andhra Branch of the All India Spinners' Association was the subject of another resolution in which a demand was made for an impartial enquiry into the causes of this calamity. It may be incidentally mentioned that a District and Sessions Judge has been appointed since then.

XXII. Constructive Programme

i. Rural Uplift Sub-Committee: While the programme of the Congress is apt to be considered by superficial observers to be political and has been largely dominated, as a matter of fact, by elections

to one body or another, either directly belonging to the Congress or to legislature or quasi-Governmental bodies like the District Boards and Municipalities, the PCC has not failed to contribute its humble service to the promotion of the constructive programme and the three items constituting it, which have now become so many popular formulas known to every tyro in the Congress viz., Harijan uplift, communal unity and village industries. These three constitute the three aspects of what is compendiously known as rural uplift. With a view to making the village self-sufficient and to finding ways and means for it, a sub-committee was constituted at Bapatla with Sri T. Prakasam as the Chairman and Sri N. Sanjeevareddi as convener. The problem before the country is not so much the balancing of the budget of the Government of the Province as that of the ryot.

This Sub-Committee is making rapid headway. Particular villages are selected in Anantapur District to serve as model villages and the spontaneous enthusiasm evoked by this programme furnishes a true index of the necessity as well as the naturalness of such a plan of organization as is witnessed by the fact that three eminent citizens of the District have, each promised to contribute substantial amounts ascribed below, for the starting of rural uplift centers in the District.

Sri M. Narayanarao	Manepalle	Rs 1,000
" N. Sanjeevareddi	Illur	Rs 1,000
" M. Narayanaswamy	Varadayapalem	Rs 5,000

ii. Harijan Uplift: Harijan uplift work claimed the attention of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee which contributed a sum of Rs 500 to a monthly magazine devoting itself to the cause of the Harijans. Another step in this direction taken by the PCC is the appointment of a Harijan as pracharak to carry on the work of Harijan uplift. Experience bears testimony to the wisdom of the appointment of a Harijan worker.

XXIII. Conference of the Presidents and General Secretaries of DCCs in Andhra Desa

A conference of the Presidents and the General Secretaries of the DCCs of Andhra Desa took place at Cocanada on 19-9-39 under the Presidency of Dr B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, President, APCC Its purpose was to evolve a uniform method of organization of Congress work in the Districts. Most of the decisions have been put into force during the year.

XXIV. Reports from DCCs

We have not received any reports from the Districts. They are yet new to the idea. The time given by us has not been sufficiently long to enable them to draw up their reports, for being embodied in the provincial account. The West Godavary, East Kistna, Bellary (Andhra) and Madras (Andhra) DCCs have submitted their annual reports. We may be permitted to single out the West Godavary District Congress Committee for its methodical work and thoroughgoing service to the district, so as to become as example to the sister districts.

XXV. Conclusion

In conclusion, we feel it our duty to make a reference to one important point. In the interests of the Congress, and undoubtedly as an unpleasant duty, it has become necessary in the course of the year to take disciplinary action against certain friends. Such action has been occasioned not by any spirit of antipathy towards them, but purely to preserve the efficiency and the integrity of the Congress organization, by which it is that we are able to combat the British Government. But for these it must be said the relations between the Provincial Congress Committee and the general

public were most cordial and the committee is grateful for every kind of cooperation that it has received at their hands.

¹ Brahmayya Gottipati (1898–19??); resident of Ghantasala, Divi Taluk, educated at Machillipatnam, organized ‘Non-Vote’ campaign, 1920; President, District Congress Committee, 1922–23; President, Bandar Taluk Board, 1927–28; President, East Krishna Khadi Board, 1923–29; one of the pioneers of the Zamindari Ryot movement in Andhra. Prominently participated in the boycott of the Simon Commission, 1927–28; imprisoned in 1930 for participating in the Black Flag demonstration against the then Governor’s visit to Machillipatnam, again sentenced for participating in the Civil Disobedience movement, 1932; responsible for temple entry of Harijans at Ghantasala, 1933; President of the 16th Andhra Political Conference, 1937; General Secretary, Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, 1937–40; detained 1942–44; President Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, 1962–64; Chairman, Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, 1964–68.

² Koti Reddi Kotireddigari (1886–1981); born at Kottireddigaripalli, Madanapalle taluk, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh; resident of Cuddapah; educated at Madras and London; advocate and agriculturist; accompanied Gandhiji during his Rayalseema tour in 1919–20; took part in Individual Satyagraha and was imprisoned; again detained during Quit India movement, 1942–43; Revenue Minister, Andhra Province, 1953–54; member, Legislative Assembly till 1962; nominated to the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, 1964–70.

³ Venkata Krishna Rao Mallavarapu (1902–81); born at Undi, Bhimavaram taluk, West Godavari district; resident of Visakhapatnam; medical practitioner; took part in 1921 non-Cooperation movement and was imprisoned; participated in the Salt Satyagraha, was sentenced to one year’s rigorous imprisonment; member, Andhra University Senate, 1934–69. He was honorary Medical Advisor, Andhra University, 1936–44; one of the founder members of the Indian Medical Association of Andhra Branch, its President in 1946, 1948 and 1965–66; served as Minister for Education, Harijan Welfare and Information in the Rajagopalachari cabinet till the formation of Andhra Pradesh, 1953.

⁴ Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy (1913–96); born at Illur, Anantapur taluk; educated in Madras; gave up his studies and participated in the Satyagraha movement. 1931; Joint Secretary, Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee, 1938–48; participated in the Individual Satyagraha and was sentenced in 1940 to rigorous imprisonment; suffered detention again during the Quit India movement, 1942–45; member, Madras Legislative Assembly, 1946, and later became Secretary, Madras Congress Legislature Party; Deputy Chief Minister of the Andhra State in October 1953 under the leadership of T. Prakasam and later held the same post in the Gopala Reddy Ministry; first Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh, 1956–59; President, AICC, 1959–62; again Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh, 1962–64; Cabinet Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri Cabinet, 1964 and then in Indira Gandhi Cabinet; Speaker, Lok Sabha, 1967–69; President of India, 1977–82.

APPENDIX-II

Munagala Estate Agrarian Trouble

In continuation of the efforts of the General Secretary mentioned in last year’s report, the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee set to implementing the pact arrived at on 10-1-39 between the zamindar and the ryots; with Sri Brahmayya arbitrating. The PCC appointed Sri Chandrupatla Bapiraju to see to the implementing of the pact under the guidance of Sri Erneni Subrahmanyam deputed by the General Secretary, APCC for that purpose.

As the efforts of these friends advanced, other questions began to crop up. The ryots asked for remission of rent as the crops failed; for relief from payment of arrears, which they would have had, provided they had paid the last two years’ dues under sections 46 and 47 of the Agricultural Debt Relief Act within a certain date, etc. Sris Brahmayya, Subrahmanyam, Bapiraju, the District Superintendent of Police, the Collector of the District and the representatives of the Ryots’ Association (Sris Vasudevarao and Venkatappayya) met again and again to solve these difficulties as they arose; and the meetings held on 24-2-39 and that on 30-3-39 in this connection were the most important ones. The former, supplemented Sri Brahmayya’s pact; and the latter indicated the lines to be kept in mind, while the zamindar implemented the pact as well as the later decisions, given by Sri Brahmayya. On 10-5-39 they met again for the fourth time; and proposed to meet once more on 28-5-39 at Munagala. This they adjourned to the 29th of May. The Representatives of the Ryots’ Association were specially invited to it. But they all chose to stay away from the meeting.

On 29-5-39, Sri Brahmayya was informed by the representatives of the Ryots' Sangh that the ryots were not in a position to pay the land revenue due to the zamindar. With this fresh complication that now faced him, Sri Brahmayya severed his connection with the pact, as it laid the axe at the very root of the pact. Five months passed each accusing the other of not implementing the pact.

In reality, none of them seemed to be earnest about putting the pact into force. The zamindar invariably linked up granting concessions with the payment of rents due to him on home farms and on his own lands transferred to his relatives and leased out. Under this strain the best efforts of the PCC could not bear fruit. On the top of this the dispute over the ownership of Ramapuram school building between the zamindar and the ryots ended in the issue of notices to some of the ryots under section 144 and further strained the relations between them.

The ryots of Munagala commenced Satyagraha on 2-6-39 under the auspices of the Munagala Ryots Sangh, by occupying and cultivating the land once owned by Sri Immidi Papayya, and then in the possession of the zamindar through a title-deed which Sri Papayya alleged had been obtained from him by use of force. The result of it all was the arrest of 128 ryots and their subsequent imprisonment to terms varying from six months to eleven months. There was a lathi charge also.

Sri Prakasam, the then Revenue Minister and Sri G. Brahmayya, General Secretary, APCC who was then out touring in the Province, hurried immediately to acquaint themselves about the happenings at Munagala. The Revenue Minister visited Munagala and had talks with the ryots there. As a result of it Satyagraha was suspended.

Immediately after the suspension of Satyagraha, the Rajah and a deputation of the Ryots' Association consisting of Sris Vasudevarao, Venkatappayya, Pidikiti Ramakotayya and D.S. Vallabha Rao, waited upon the Revenue Minister. Consequently Satyagraha was given up and Sri Erneni Subrahmanyam was requested to arbitrate in the dispute between the ryots and the zamindar with the award of Sri Brahmayya as basis.

Sris E. Subrahmanyam and Rangasayi (Office Secretary, APCC) proceeded to Munagala to bring about a settlement. The ryots presented before Sri Subrahmanyam about six hundred petitions that fell under the various heads of Sri Brahmayya's pact and the subsequent decisions, Sri Anjaneyulu and the band of young men ransacked the paragana, and dug up cases which were given up by the aggrieved as past all redemption. Persons that fled the paragana, returned with their petitions for redress.

Apart from these, many ryots were going to Munagala every day for the settlement even of their private disputes. With Sri Brahmayya's pact for basis, even the petty zamindars of the surrounding estates were willing to settle the disputes that arose between their ryots and themselves, as a result of the new consciousness the Munagala struggle roused in them.

But it was not such smooth sailing in the Munagala estate itself. The arbitrator was again faced with the Question 'who is to implement the pact first'. The Zamindar was although pressing the question of collections and of what was yet due from the ryots. It was always a big figure.

The ryots with their crops that failed, and with no prospect of a better crop could not raise money even for their daily needs. Many smaller ryots and agricultural labourers were going even without food for two or three days continuously. Sights of tenants with their flock of hungry children, gathering round Sri Subrahmanyam whenever he went to the villages to acquaint himself with the grievances of the people first-hand, became very common.

Under such circumstances through the persuasion of Sri Subrahmanyam, the ryots on their side lifted the social boycott that was in force and began the payment of their dues, and in return as a beginning the zamindar on his side relinquished his title over the land of Immidi Papayya.

Besides this piece of land in which the ryots offered Civil Disobedience, there is some wet land for which Sri Papayya put forth a like claim. The question is now before the zamindar awaiting

disposal, along with a decree which he questions, and a pro-note which (Papayya) alleges was executed in the name of the zamindar's brother under pressure. Among the petitions to Sri Subrahmanyam there were several such complaints, now waiting to be set right by the Zamindar in fulfillment of the gesture he had made.

The collections did not come up to the expectations of the Zamindar; and with the collections falling short of such expectations the ryots' complaints that were handed to the zamindar for disposal according to Sri Brahmayya's award remained untouched; and this inspite of the arbitrator's letter that matters would be deemed to have to come to a stop, in case the zamindar did not dispose of the petitions before the stipulated date.

Indeed matters reached a dead set. While the talks with the zamindar were in progress regarding the petitions presented to the arbitrator, remission for the jovari crop, changes from wet to dry of lands irrigated by wells but which have become fallow for some years past, because of the wells falling into disuse, and remission over Kamatham lands, the zamindar said that he would move no further unless he recovered all the dues. It was even said by the zamindar that the pact could not be applied for Fasli 1348 as the accounts for that year had been closed. There was not a technical objection that the zamindar did not clutch at to confound the ryots.

As to the ryots, it was felt by the arbitrators and our office Secretary, that it would be whipping a dead horse to issue ultimately like the one that preceded this breakdown. But the zamindar could not be convinced of it.

Upon these circumstances being represented to the General Secretary, APCC he moved the Government in regard to the release of prisoners, that were undergoing imprisonment in connection with satyagraha. In this connection Sri E. Subrahmanyam and Sri Srirangasayi met the Revenue Minister and the prime minister. It was represented to them that the ryots made a sincere effort to pay their dues; and that things had come to a stand-still, because the zamindar required that the dues should be paid to the last pie, before he could go into the several complaints that were given to him. Thereupon the release of the prisoners connected with this Satyagraha movement was affected; and all except six were released.

With the release of the Prisoners, the ryots and their leaders (Sris Venkatapayya and others) went the whole way with the arbitrator for a reasonable settling of the primary questions; without allowing smaller issues to cloud them.

Under this latter head, come the cutting of saplings, stray grazing here and there in the zamindar's lands by the ryots, and the consequent filing of suits on account of these and of other reports from over-zealous servants. What harassing these suits by the zamindar mean to the ryots can be understood only when we see, how the ryots start a day or two previous to the posted date on foot, with enough food cooked by a special process and preserved for five or six days, to attend the court at a distance of 40 to 80 miles. Their resources are so slender, that they cannot afford to pay even for a day's boarding out of home. The circumstances at this time were really bad. In consideration of the hard times, the Provincial Congress Committee issued an appeal for funds for the relief of the famine-stricken people of the Munagala Estate.

But all these difficulties of the ryots did not weigh with the zamindar. Returning from Madras, Sris Subrahmanyam and Srirangasayi met the zamindar once again and took up the matter afresh with him. Most of the petitions according to the zamindar were impossible demands. The arbitrator had no recourse but to tackle all the petitions himself, and dispose them of to the best of his lights.

As was the case at every previous interview the zamindar had a catalogue of grievances, ranging from the cutting of saplings to willful trespassing upon fields, grazing of lands, cutting of tank bunds, and non-payment of Revenues. Nothing could convince him that the trespasses were stray and unintentional; and that the non-payment of dues was due to sheer lack of the where-with-all

to pay; and that the ryots were sincere in putting the pact into force. It was represented to him that it remained now for him to fulfil his part of the pact.

The air was thick with rumours that the Congress Ministers would be resigning. This raised doubts regarding the terms of the pact ever being fulfilled by the zamindar.

Time was short; and if anything was to be done at all it should be done before the crisis could overtake the people. Sri Subrahmanyam in a consultation with Sri Narashimharao and representatives of the Ryot Sangh, proposed to the Zamindar that it would be really grand, if he could make a proclamation in a public meeting of the ryots of his paragona, rather than make it a matter for Sri Erneni Subrahmanyam's enquiry into every complaint and disposal. In the interests of lasting peace in his estate it was put to him, that he would do well to take a broad view of things and satisfy the ryots. The zamindar fell in with the proposal.

The zamindar presented the draft of the proclamation he wished to make to Sri Subrahmanyam and the General Secretary, Andhra Provincial Congress Committee. Sris Narasimharao, Uppala Ramayya, Subrahmanyam and Brahmayya discussed it among themselves; and the proclamation that was finally made to the ryots was the result of these consultations.

On 6-11-39 the zamindar convened a meeting of the ryots of his paragona; and made the aforesaid proclamation to the ryots. The General Secretary, PCC, the arbitrator Sri Subrahmanyam, Sri K. Narasimharao, representative of the Ryot Sangh, the District Collector and the District Superintendent of Police and the Sub-Collector, Bezwada and several others that had a hand in the settlement attended the meeting on special invitation from the zamindar; and the proclamation was well received by the ryots. Sri Subrahmanyam and the General Secretary APCC that was the author of the pact thanked the zamindar for the concessions he proclaimed over and above the terms of the pact.

The Congress Ministries resigned on 28-10-39. The Press announced that the six Satyagrahis in prison were ordered to be released by the Congress Government just before their resignation. But their release did not come off. Later, under orders from the Advisers to the Government of Madras, three of Satyagrahis of Munagala still in prison were released. The remaining three Messrs, Prasadrao, Parandhamayya and Satyanarayana are serving their terms of imprisonments.

The implementing of the proclamation by the zamindar has come under some criticism from the Secretary of the Ryot Sangh, Mungala. The ryots brought reports to the PCC office that the ryots' petitions were being relegated to the waste paper basket.

Thereupon Sris Subrahmanyam and Rangasayi along with Sri K. Narasimharao interviewed the District Collector and represented the matter to him as well as to the District Superintendent of Police. We are glad to note that they were assured by the Collector and the District Superintendent of Police that they would see to the implementing of proclamation by the zamindar, to the very letter, provided a case was made out against him in that behalf.

Before we close we must express our thanks to the District Collector, Kistna, the District Superintendent of Police and the Sub-Collector, Bezwada for the help they have rendered all along in our efforts to bring the pact into force.

Later Sri Subrahmanyam met the zamindar in this regard. After the interview the zamindar took to the disposal of the complaints received by him.

We hope that the zamindar will give no occasion to the PCC to complain against his treatment of the ryots' petitions and the way he implemented the terms of the pact (10-1-39) and the later decisions (24-2-39) given by Sri Brahmayya, General Secretary, APCC and the terms of the proclamation made by the zamindar himself on 6-11-39; and that the ryots of Mungala will have better times and better relations with their zamindar.

Table Referred to in V-1 Page 3

<i>District</i>	<i>Primary Membership</i>			
	<i>1936</i>	<i>1937</i>	<i>1938</i>	<i>1939</i>
1. North Vizagapatnam	341	20,344	6,919	8,983
2. South Vizagapatnam	2,945	29,138	46,543	21,862
3. East Godavary	9,296	39,463	61,214	28,658
4. West Godavary	8,280	41,791	41,474	33,124
5. East Kistna	2,807	32,296	15,507	17,438
6. West Kistna	3,890	44,441	65,244	7,663
7. Guntur	10,633	77,980	27,457	41,304
8. Nellore	3,658	11,673	26,075	10,653
9. Chittoor	4,936	12,810	17,131	3,740
10. Cuddappah	1,310	4,591	5,000	5,600
11. Kurnool	688	7,235	6,431	8,767
12. Ananthapur	1,055	6,858	9,410	6,290
13. Bellary	230	2,408	4,987	5,175
14. Madras	2,477	3,000	2,809	7,469
	52,546	3,33,927	3,36,191	2,06,726

Karnatak Province Congress Committee Dharwar

<i>Table I</i> <i>No. District</i>	<i>1939</i>		<i>Membership</i>	
	<i>Total membership</i>	<i>Rural membership</i>	<i>Urban membership</i>	<i>Women member</i>
I. British District + Portion of North Karnatak States Under them				
1. Belgaum	19821	16303	3518	1646
	('B'=18759; 'S'=1062)	('B'=15241; 'S'=1062)	('B'=3518; 'S'=Nil)	('B'=1466; 'S'=180)
2. Bellary	3339	2394	945	220
3. Bijapur	12930	10804	2126	511
	('B'=12143; 'S'=787)	('B'=10,017; 'S'=787)	('B'=2126; 'S'=Nil)	('B'=505; 'S'=6)
4. Coorg	1373	1373	—	26
5. Dharwar	16396	12051	4345	1532
	('B'=16241; 'S'=155)	('B'=11896; 'S'=155)	('B'=4345; 'S'=Nil)	('B'=1464; 'S'=68)
6. Karwar	8918	8918	—	763
7. Mangalore	7504	6150	1354	1077
8. Bangalore Cantt.	901	—	901	30
II. State Area				
9. Mysore	2242	1655	587	53
10. Kadur	262	262	—	6
11. Hyderabad State (Kannada Portion)	1740	862	878	131
Total	75,426	60,772	14,654	5995

Karnatak Province Congress Committee

Table 2		1939		Membership	
No.	Area	Total membership	Rural membership	Urban membership	Women member
I	Administered Area	69178	55989	13189	5551
II	State Area	6248	4783	1465	444
Total for the Province		75426	60772	14654	5995

Note: The figures for the state portion which are in the midst of British have been transferred to II State Area in this Table.

Statement showing following figures relating to Gujarat PCC of the year 1939

Name of the Samiti	Members			Members		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Ladies	Muslims	Member fee
Gujarat PCC	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ahmedabad DCC	15870	14562	30432	2201	343	7649
Kaira DCC	4642	12065	16707	1248	201	4208
Panch Mahals DCC	2699	5298	7997	554	75	1997
Broach DCC	1100	4320	4520	120	100	1130
Surat DCC	3263	17237	20498	2924	116	5149
	27574	52580	80154	7047	835	20133

185. Statement Showing the Number of Primary Congress Members
Enrolled in the Districts of United Provinces During the Year 1939

AICC Papers, File No. G-53/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8641, NMML.

District	Women Members	Muslim Members	In Urban Areas	In Rural Areas	Total
1. Agra	820	735	9,140	20,500	29,640
2. Aligarh	902	484	6,088	33,773	39,861
3. Allahabad	299	277	12,004	25,914	37,918
4. Almora	353	27	—	17,559	17,559
5. Azamgarh	190	647	838	12,395	13,233
6. Badaun	133	228	293	7,110	7,403
7. Bahraich	113	535	2,606	7,228	9,824
8. Ballia	187	659	1,216	19,811	21,027
9. Banda	156	83	673	6,348	7,021
10. Barabanki	107	350	242	9,355	9,636
11. Bareilly	263	242	2,386	8,143	10,529
12. Basti	114	537	1,219	16,455	17,674
13. Benares	226	248	5,806	8,376	14,182
14. Bijnor	3,818	2,716	2,243	16,221	18,454

(Contd.)

<i>District</i>	<i>Women Members</i>	<i>Muslim Members</i>	<i>In Urban Areas</i>	<i>In Rural Areas</i>	<i>Total</i>
15. Bulandshahr	2,071	1,060	3,369	27,011	30,380
16. Cawnpore	388	325	12,084	30,880	42,944
17. Dehra Dun	295	389	1,416	5,443	6,849
18. Etah	303	466	1,279	11,347	12,626
19. Etawah	474	494	1,221	35,515	36,736
20. Fatehpur	89	84	195	7,373	7,568
21. Farrukhabad	613	272	4,122	15,911	20,033
22. Fyzabad	372	649	1,058	13,726	14,784
23. Garhwal	8	98	—	2,155	2,175
24. Ghazipur	184	241	1,356	6,080	7,448
25. Gonda	111	401	695	9,764	10,459
26. Gorakhpore	298	783	2,279	26,361	28,604
27. Hamirpur	372	204	717	10,614	11,331
28. Hardoi	—	—	—	15,132	15,132
29. Jalaun	110	112	1,215	4,863	6,078
30. Jhansi	583	260	3,601	10,645	14,286
31. Jaunpore	359	447	609	17,998	18,707
32. Lakhimpur-Kheri	323	641	764	18,198	18,962
33. Lucknow	419	879	7,614	13,736	20,990
34. Mainpuri	544	205	—	—	21,313
35. Meerut	2,793	2,290	3,359	38,607	41,966
36. Mirzapur	106	225	956	9,543	10,499
37. Moradabad	289	1,207	4,079	17,413	21,492
38. Muttra	247	113	1,787	9,829	11,616
39. Muzaffarnagar	899	342	1,738	13,161	14,599
40. Nainital	272	139	1,219	4,959	6,178
41. Pilibkit	132	83	1,090	6,639	7,729
42. Pratabgarh	751	372	—	22,405	21,940
43. Rae Bareli	159	160	244	14,667	14,891
44. Saharanpur	2,259	1,553	2,858	21,017	23,875
45. Shahjahanpur	111	225	989	11,817	12,860
46. Sitapur	185	532	1,309	18,862	20,171
47. Sultanpur	375	540	352	14,168	14,520
48. Unao	255	130	255	12,774	13,029
Total	24,440	21,352	1,07,429	7,29,284	8,36,713

186. *Bombay Provincial Congress Committee: Report for the Year 1939*

AICC Papers, File No. G-53/1939-40, Microfilm Roll No. 8641, NMML.

*1 February 1940***Prohibition**

The Government of Bombay appointed a Prohibition Propaganda Board in March 1939. The Bombay Provincial Congress Committee fully cooperated with every activity of this Board. We

observed a 'Prohibition Week' in the last week of March last year, which was a great success. The Secretary of the Prohibition Sub-Committee of the BPCC, was taken by Government on the Prohibition Propaganda Board as a member. On the 1st of August, 1939, prohibition was launched in the city of Bombay and its suburbs. Congress fully participated in the day's demonstrations, which were unique in their character. Prohibition activities in the city are progressing very satisfactorily and many Congressmen are associated with these from day to day.

Bombay Municipal Congress Party

For the first time in the long history of the Bombay Corporation, the Congress Party was returned as the majority party in the last general elections. We captured 58 out of 114 elective seats. About a dozen friendly members, including representatives of trade unions, cooperating with us almost always. Two bye-elections were subsequently caused and both these seats were captured by the Congress. The party members hold the key positions in all important Committees of the Corporation. Under the sole leadership of Sjt Mathooradas Tricamjee, the party has been able to put some good work. The outstanding achievement of the party is the introduction of free and compulsory primary education throughout the city from the 1st of January 1940. Adult education and the solution of the problem of beggary and delinquent children are also engaging the serious attention of the party.

AICC Meeting in Bombay

After a lapse of nearly three years, Bombay has had the privilege and honour of being selected as the venue for holding the AICC meeting in the last week of June 1939. It was a great success from more than one point of view.

Official Reception to distinguished leaders and visitors

The members of the Egyptian Delegation to the Tripuri Congress on their way back were entertained at a Tea Party held in their honour at the Congress House on the 31st of March 1939. On the 1st of April they were given a public send-off at the Mole Station. On the 3rd of June 1939, Babu Rajendra Prasad, who was elected Congress President in the place of Babu Subhas Chandra Bose, resigned, was given, on his arrival in Bombay, a grand public reception and he was taken in a procession from the Station to the Congress House through important thoroughfares in the city. In July last, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was given an official send-off and reception on his departure to and return from Ceylon mission. On the 15th of December 1939, Sir Stafford Cripps, the well-known Socialist leader of England, was in our midst and he was entertained at a Tea Party of Congress workers, whom he addressed.

Other Public Functions

The National Week, Gandhi Jayanti Week, and All-India Days were observed with the usual enthusiasm.

War and Indian Crisis

Since the out-break of war, a number of public meetings, which were well-attended, have been held at which leaders of all India fame, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Shri C. Rajagopalachariar, Acharya Kripalani, and others addressed and explained the audience the situation in the country vis-a-vis the war crisis. On the 2nd of October, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, according to the Christian Calendar, the BPCC brought out a booklet containing

resolutions regarding India's attitude towards war passed by Congress and also statements on the subject by Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and these were distributed in thousands.

A Council of Action to devise ways and means for preparing Congress for the coming struggle was appointed by the BPCC in the month of December 1939. This Council immediately met and formulated a programme of work for the entire city which is now being put into effect by the BPCC and its various subordinate District Congress Committees. A copy of the circular letter addressed to the District Congress Committees dated the 21st December 1939, detailing the programme chalked out by the Council of Action, together with a Satyagrahi Volunteer's Pledge and Enrollment Form, are enclosed herewith for your information.

Financial Year and Auditing of Accounts of Subordinate Committees

Pursuant to the instructions contained in the AICC office circular dated 8th July, the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, by a resolution, decided to fix the financial year of the Committee and of the various District Congress Committees under its jurisdiction as from 1st October to 30th September. The accounts of the BPCC as well as of the District Congress Committees, in accordance therewith, were brought to a close on the 30th September last. Owing to the 'crisis' the audit of these accounts could not be taken up hitherto and as soon as it is done and the auditors' reports are ready, they will be forwarded to you.

The Provincial Congress Committee, during the year under report, also introduced a system of auditing and inspecting of the accounts of the BPCC and other subordinate Committees and for this purposes appointed an Auditor Inspector in September last.

Congress Membership

With a view to reduce bogus membership to a minimum, the Bombay PCC introduced the 'Card System' and also stopped the practice of issuing membership books indiscriminately. One membership book was given to a member at a time against requisite deposit and this not only minimized the misuse of membership forms, it ensured steady membership till the closing the time. About the 'Card System', it is too early to pronounce any opinion one way or the other, but we have no doubt that the experiment, if worked out properly, should go a long way to completely eradicate impersonation at the time of elections. Apart from the improvement and reform in the enrollment of members, the BPCC had, during the period of enrollment, engaged several Inspectors whose duty it was to go round and report if the persons mentioned in the application forms were actually existing or not. Some cases of bogus membership were traced and the parties punished. The total membership for the year 1939 is 60,219 as against 61,936 in 1938 and 48,525 in 1937.

Vacancies in the BPCC

During the year under report there were as many as seven vacancies in the membership of the BPCC. These were also elected delegates. Four vacancies occurred as a result of action taken by the Executive of the BPCC against four members, who in spite of the warning issued both by the Congress President and the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, participated in the July 9, demonstrations organized by Shri Subhas Chandra Bose...

S.K. Patil
General Secretary, BPCC



187. Shia Political Conference

Tribune, 31 December 1939.*Chhapra*

20 December 1939

'Let us hope the present Government of the UP will act up to the declared Policy of the British in India of permitting nothing that is not sanctioned by the long usage and custom in the interest of peace and order', observed Maulvi Saiyed Kalb-i-Abbas,¹ MLC United Provinces, in the course of his presidential address at the 8th session of the All India Shia Political Conference meeting at Chhapra (Bihar) today.

He hoped that peace and harmony would soon be re-established between Shias and Sunnis, at least politically. He made a fervent plea for Shias to politically organize themselves, infuse a spirit of self-confidence in their youths, enlist them as national scouts and carry on effective propaganda for their cause. He detailed the various agencies through which this political awakening could be brought among the community.

Proceeding to deal with reasons for 'backwardness of Shias in politics', the president said they were a religious-minded community and they had not realised the importance of political organization. He suggested that the difficulty about funds could be solved by their setting apart a portion of the *Tabburruk* or its price for political needs. Further when big congregations of Shias meet annually a day could be set apart for political meetings.

He urged the Shias to work shoulder to shoulder with both the Congress and the League so far as their economic programme was concerned. They should maintain their creed of joint electorates as an ideal and should push forward every movement which aimed at nation building.

The President then proceeded to point out why the Shias claimed separate representation and said that they should in this transitory stage frame their constitution in such form as to leave the option of joining either of the two political organizations subject to the control of their High Command at the centre.

He doubted if India could be free if the minority communities were oppressed by the majority. He opined it was lack of farsightedness and generosity on the part of the Congress High Command which had alienated the sympathies of Muslims from the Congress and the same shortsighted attitude of the non-Shia Muslim majority towards the Shias had hurt them.

The President detailed the Shia demands which had been formulated by their leading men under the guidance of Maharaj Kumar of Mahmudabad. These fell under two heads: the fundamental rights of citizenship as had been secured to every citizen under the Government of India Act and similar demands as the Muslim League had made against the Congress for safeguarding its language, culture, religious beliefs and other special interests as a condition precedent to the settlement of the communal problem.

The Shias, he asserted, were a population of 2½ crores with a glorious historical past. He, therefore, urged that they should get the same representation as the Muslims have got against the Hindus in different provinces.

Concluding he mentioned that apart from resolutions that they might adopt on various political matters, the most important item for consideration was the revision of their constitution and question whether they should join any particular political party and if so on what terms.

¹ See Maulvi Saiyed Kalb-i-Abbas's biographical note in Chapter 8, Item No. 128.

Chapter 7. National Politics (Leftist)

I. IN THE WAKE OF TRIPURI CONGRESS

1. A Communist Protest: P. Sundarayya to Jawaharlal Nehru, 1 January 1939

AICC Papers, File No. P-3, Part 2, 1938–39, NMML.

1 January 1939

Andhra
Congress Socialist Party
Governorpet
Bezwada

Dear Comrade Jawaharlal Nehru,

I am enclosing a copy of my letter to the President Indian National Congress. I request you to move in the matter and see that persons holding Communist views are not debarred from being elected to Congress Committees.

With Comradely greetings

Yours
P. Sundarayya

[Enclosure]

P. Sundarayya to Congress President, 1 January 1939

Dear President,

I filed my nomination in Kovur constituency, Nellore District, for the coming Tripuri session of the Indian National Congress. But my nomination was invalidated on the ground that I hold Communist views, and that I am a Communist, by the Election Officer who is also the resident of the Nellore District Congress Committee. I was not present at the time of scrutiny, away at Japalayam in connection with the Tamilnadu provincial Congress Socialist Party Conference.

I am at present member of the AICC and also of the Working Committee of the Nellore District Congress Committee. I am also Secretary of the Andhra Congress Socialist Party.

Against this decision of the Election Officer I had no other way except to appeal to the Working Committee of the PCC. In my appeal I have pointed out that the Communist Party is banned in

India and that I am not a member of it. But I do hold Communist views as a follower of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Some of the Working Committee members asked me to withdraw my nomination and thus avoid them being placed in the unfortunate position of refusing my appeal on the ground that I am a Communist. I refused to comply with their request. I do not know their decision yet.

Please consider this as my appeal against my being debarred from the Congress. Please stay the PCC election in the above constituency where I filed my nomination. The election is to be held on the 7th January. I hope you would hold my nomination valid and order the elections to take place before the 25th of this month, and thus enable me to participate in the coming PCC meeting and in the elections of the AICC.

Governorpet, Bezwada
1.1.1939.

Yours fraternally,
P. Sundarayya
Secretary Andhra Provincial Party

[Enclosure]

Pattabhi Sitaramayya to the General Secretary All India Congress Committee,
5 January 1939, NMML

AICC Papers, File No. P-3, part 2, 1938-39.

Andhra Provincial
Congress Committee
Masulipatam
5 January 1939

Sir,

In the matter of Shri P. Sundarayya's candidature for the delegateship of the Indian National Congress which means also the membership of the Provincial Congress Committee, I invite your attention to the following facts in answer to your telegram on the subject, and in continuation of my reply thereto by wire. The fact is that the President of the Nellore District Congress Committee brought to my notice that the Congress office was being used by a Congressman who had been frequenting the place making it his quarters and using it for lodging Communist literature, which was concealed in a box in his possession. The President of the District Congress Committee thought that it was a dangerous thing for him to allow this to proceed and informed me of the exact state of things. I instructed him to verify the matter in the presence of neutral friends and ask the person concerned to account for it, if really there was such literature. Thereupon he invited the President of the District Board, a somewhat moderately inclined person, and a recent recruit to the Congress, and three or four friends of neutral complexion, and asked the young man to open the box in their presence. The box was found to be full of communist literature, back numbers of communist magazines which were being circulated apparently from that place as the centre. Thereupon as the young man feared that the President of the District Congress Committee was handing the papers up to the Police, he asked for all the literature except one magazine which was being looked into by an old Congressman by name Shri B. Perumallu Naidu, formerly a member of the Central Legislative Assembly, now a member of the Madras Legislative Assembly. Shortly after, the President of the District Congress Committee was called out by somebody as chance would have it, and he left the room. As soon as he left the room the young man, whose name is Adiseshiah, jumped in and pounced upon this old Congressman's table and snatched away the magazine. Shri Sundarayya is the head of the Congress Socialist Party which is virtually functioning as the

Communist Party in this Province. Recently there have been quarrels amongst the members of this party, in all of which Mr Sundarayya was found to be the central figure. Depositing of Communist literature in the Congress office and making it the centre for the distribution and stocking of the Communist literature was considered highly objectionable and could not but be traced to Mr Sundarayya's knowledge and to his approval.

2. When the nominations for the Congress Delegates' elections were lodged, the Nellore District Congress Election Committee rejected Mr Sundarayya's nomination. The latter came to me for appeal against that decision on the 31st of December 1938. I asked him to write out his appeal and present it to the Provincial Election Committee, consisting of three members, besides myself, and of which I was an ex-officio member. Thereupon Shri Sundarayya requested that his appeal should be placed before the whole Working Committee instead of the Provincial Election Committee which consisted of only three members, as the matter involved a very important principle. I agreed to place the matter before the Working Committee. Mr Sundarayya appeared in person before the Working Committee and answered some questions. He said that he was a Communist, that he was reading Communist literature, that he was getting Communist magazines but refused to say from where he was getting or to whom he was sending the issues onward. It was obvious from his answer that he was privy to the lodging of the Communist literature in the Congress office as well as to its circulation from there. This was considered a particularly unworthy and improper course for the head of a party, in respect of literature which has been declared illegal, and to whose cult he belonged. What was more, the appeal petition itself was a strange document. It is translated for your perusal and subjoined at the end of this letter. In this document he admits that he is a Marxist and that as a Marxist he believes in violence as the inevitable factor that must settle the issue. It is one thing to sign the Congress creed and say that one does not profess faith in non-violence except as a policy and it is quite a different thing to say that means and ends are not the same and that although he signs the creed he does not believe in its contents. When there is an admission like this it is obvious that the situation calls for notice.

3. In the Andhra Desa a series of fiery speeches have been delivered in the past by young men ostensibly belonging to the Congress Socialist Party but really receiving their inspiration from the Communist party. They are in constant touch with the heads of the Communist Party in Bombay. The speeches delivered by them from the highest placed members of the party down to the lowest strata, are fiery and are of a vituperative nature, calculated to promote class war of a violent nature. Some of the speeches have been placed before the Working Committee of the AICC. The Hon'ble, the Prime Minister of Madras has drawn my attention to some of these speeches. The work of Congress workers who are carrying on propaganda in the villages has been made impossible by the delivery of these speeches. Whenever the attention of young men is drawn to the speeches they ward the point off by saying that they are either CID reports or the reports of interested landholders or of Congressmen who are of a persuasion opposite to their own. Obviously we must have information from one or the other of the above sources and can only depend upon the veracity of reports emanating from anyone quarter especially from the third class of friends. The Working Committee held that the head of the party must himself bear all responsibility for such methods of propaganda of literature and on his own admission, he (Shri Sundarayya) does not believe in non-violence as a creed or even as a policy. It was under these circumstances that his candidature was rejected and the matter may be brought up before the Working Committee of the AICC if you so please.

Yours sincerely,
B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya
President

2. Communalism is Conspiracy to Disrupt National Movement:

K.M. Ashraf

Bombay Chronicle, 2 January 1939.

Calcutta
2 January 1939

The determination to develop a programme of social work on a national scale was reiterated by Dr K.M. Ashraf, presiding over the All-India Students' Conference at Wellington Square this afternoon.

Mr Sarat Chandra Bose, leader of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party, opened the Conference, which was attended by delegates from all over India.

Referring to the student movement in India, Dr Ashraf said essentially democratic and anti-Imperialist in its nature it has allied itself with the progressive youth of other countries, and it is a matter of some satisfaction to all of us that the All India Students' Federation has already been represented at the World Peace Conference and the World Youth Congress.

Wardha Scheme

Speaking of education, he pointed to the Wardha Scheme of Education and said, 'the Zakir Husain Committee has in fact prepared a new and progressive syllabus, but the cost of putting it into force would exhaust the whole of the present Provincial budget.'

'Attempts are being made by both Hindu and Muslim communal politicians to disrupt the National Front of the students movement', he continued. 'Suffice it to say that communalism as a whole is nothing more or less than conspiracy to disrupt our democratic and national movement.'

Serious Limitation

Concluding, Dr Ashraf made a few observations in connection with the organization work of the Students' Federation. So far the Federation was primarily urban in its character and the members were mainly enrolled from among college students. This was a serious limitation. 'For in India if the anti-Imperialist movement, specially in these days of mass struggle everywhere, is to keep on functioning within these limits, I am afraid we will be beset with serious problems of outlook and methods of work. It may give rise to factionalism or in any case to a very narrow and limited outlook on social or cultural life in general. We must develop the programme of social work which we have undertaken and carry it out on a national scale'.

3. India's Cultural United Front: The 2nd All-India Progressive Writers' Conference

National Front, 8 January 1939.

'The popularization of culture and the necessity to defend the democratic ideal against the onslaughts of reaction at home and abroad demands that we, the writers of India, who as members of a generation which has actually seen the decay of capitalism and suffered years of disillusionment through the oppression imposed upon our country by an alien imperialism, join together, in spite of individual differences, in an unshakeable unity for common action, to face the crisis in Culture and to rebuild the social order with an intense belief in the organism which we wish to create. The scientific and objective discussion of the foundations of all belief to find our roots in tradition, the sensitive rendering of the tragedies in our midst to rouse emotion and help men to act, the

exploration of the relationship of individuals (as against individualists) to organized parties, becomes a duty to all intellectuals: it is the prelude to a cultural awakening in our country.'

Dr Mulk Raj Anand gave this call for unity to all intellectuals in India at the Second All-India Progressive Writers' Conference held at the Ashutosh Memorial Hall in Calcutta, on the 24th and 25th December 1938.

The proceedings of the conference began with an address by Dr Rabindra Nath Tagore in which he mourned the loss of Mustafa Kamal Atatürk who had opened the path of progress for the whole of Asia and whose triumphant career indicates a victory for the entire Asiatic continent. While recounting the causes of the downfall of western culture in the course of his address, Dr Tagore said: 'The habit of clinging to the past has led to endless misery and humiliation and in course of time the impact of the West destroyed our own civilization, uprooted the culture that had once spread into the remotest villages. Sitting at the feet of foreign school masters we grew more and more convinced that our powerlessness and ignorance were inherent and that our destiny was to wear the chains of stupidity.'

The Chairman of the Reception Committee, Dr Naresh Chandra Sen Gupta, in the course of his address said, 'Progress of man as I understand it, and I hope you all understand it, means a widening of his freedom. The history of civilization is the history of expanding freedom.... There is a big movement afoot that laughs at the notion of freedom, makes short work of the claim of each man to be an end in himself, tramples on all notions of justice, and seeks to replace all that men have hitherto deemed worthy of regard by a pagan adoration of National glory... for the salvage of humanity and civilization. In this great crisis every resource of mankind must now be mobilized without delay.'

The proceedings of the conference were conducted by a presidium consisting of Dr Mulk Raj Anand, Mr Sudhindranath Dutta, Mr Buddhadeva Bose, Mr Sailajananda Mukerjee and Pandit Sudarshan. In the course of a very brilliant address, Mr Sudhindranath Dutta, the most influential of the young poets in Bengali, explained the relationship of tradition and the individual talent. He analysed the emergence in Bengal earlier than any where else in India, of a spurious 'Whiggism' after the British conquest. This liberalism more foisted upon Bengal than accepted, had however cut the middle classes off from the soil. Hence the subjectivism of modern Bengali literature. With integrity of the highest character, Mr Dutt confessed to the difficult plight of the Bengali intellectual and warned: 'Not the introspecting intellectuals but the enduring masses are the guardians of tradition and directors of progress; and whatever be the caliber of the experimenter unless he passes the pragmatic test of his people, the facts he would fondly establish are febrile dreams and the truths he would loudly proclaim are feeble fancies.'

The first session of the conference concluded with four resolutions: (i) the sacred duty of all those forces in our country which are fighting for the political emancipation of India; (ii) the solidarity of the Progressive Writers of India with the writers of the world who are fighting against reaction, fascism, and imperialism; (iii) the condemnation of the ban imposed by the Govt of India against the entry of Progressive Literature into this country; and (iv) the need for eschewing communalism, sectarianism, and reaction from the syllabus of education shortly to be introduced by the provincial Governments.

The Crisis in Culture

The second session started with a discussion on the Crisis in Culture which was initiated by Professor Hiren Mukerjee who showed how culture was threatened by fascism. He quoted the familiar phrase of the Nazi dramatist Johst: 'When I hear the word culture I cock my revolver'. In the opinion of Professor Mukerjee the writers and artists who are on the side of the workers and

peasants will of necessity, find that they must forge out of their art a sword for use in the struggle which they cannot avoid.

Mr Narendranath of Punjab read a paper on Marxism and Literature. The second session concluded with short surveys of the different provincial literatures by Professor Balraj Sahani of Santinekatan, Mr Ali Sardar Jafri of Lucknow and Mr Sundra Sarma from Madras Presidency.

The papers read at the third session included (i) a survey of modern Bengali literature by Mr Buddhadeva Bose; (ii) Recent Revolutionary Poetry in Urdu by Sajjad Zaheer; and (iii) the Problem of Hindustani by Dr Abdul Aleem.

Mr Sajjad Zaheer, than whom few writers in Hindustani enjoy a wider influence, summarized the new trends in Urdu poetry. Revolutionary poetry, he said, is no longer a novelty. The message of revolution has now reached every corner of the land, the cry of 'Inquilab Zindabad' is resounding in every town and village of India. Our society is restless, nothing is stable, no institutions, no individual groups or class feels itself safe. This is the atmosphere in which new revolutionary poetry has been born. All the most significant younger poets Majaz, Jafri, Shahab, Rai, Muttalabi, and Jazbi, desire independence intensely. They believe that the workers and the peasants have a leading role to play in the struggle for freedom. They hate Capitalism. They call on youth to come out boldly into the struggle. They want Revolution. Majaz, for instance, in a poem which is the quintessence of their common belief:

'I do not deny the magic of thy music.

I do not deny the sweetness of thy tunes.

But look at the changing colour of the World.

Behold, and listen the call of battle is on every tongue.'

Taken as a whole, Sajjad Zaheer said, that the conception of revolution in many of these poets is too simple and incomplete. Only war cries and invocations, if repeated too often, create contrary effect to the one that is desired. This inadequacy lay in the essentially humanitarian approach of the middle class poets to the working class struggle. It was a kind of humiliation at the second remove, latent in the disgust at a system which allows suffering that inspires the bourgeois poet rather than the personal insult, and this had led to the use of high sounding words in the attempt to create a revolutionary atmosphere. 'Only a direct participation,' Sajjad Zaheer exhorted 'in the mass movements can give the poet the personal experience so necessary both for understanding society and changing it.' And revolutionary activity, he went on to say, is in the canalization of our sentiments through the conscious understanding of social phenomena.

Hindustani as *Lingua Franca*

A more concrete note was struck by Dr Abdul Aleem in his address on the Problem of Hindustani as the *lingua franca* of India. There were nearly two hundred million people who completely or partially understood Hindustani. Unfortunately the deep rooted prejudices for or against Urdu or Hindi clouded the fact that the basic language was Hindustani, and Urdu and Hindi were only two literary forms. Dr Aleem declared that unless the Congress High Command appointed a central committee to find out ways and means of developing a common literary form the problem would not be solved. Efforts in this direction have so far proved abortive from want of unprejudiced and objective understanding of the issues involved.

The Hindustani Academy of Allahabad, misnamed for it is really divided into two distinct and parallel institutions for representing Hindi on one side and Urdu on the other, has done nothing whatsoever for the development of a real and basic Hindustani.

The division of Hindustani which means Hindi and Urdu is chiefly due to the use of different scripts. The solution commonly suggested is that both these scripts should be taught to everyone.

But this would make the problem of mass education very difficult. On the basis of a profound analysis Dr Aleem made out a case for the adoption of the Roman Script suitably adapted to the needs of Hindustani. And he went on to suggest that the Indian Progressive Writers' Association could alone handle the controversy to propose a more constructive plan: 'It is we who want that literature should have the closest touch with the masses. It is for us to make the language and the script easy enough for the masses to learn. We want to keep literature clear of communalism and racial antagonism. So it is our duty to evolve a common language and a common script. Let us not shirk it.'

Litterateurs from different Indian Provinces contributed their quota of enlightenment to the conference. A remarkable report was read by Ahmad Ali, for instance, about the emergence from the folk tradition of Northern India of a hitherto unknown revolutionary peasant poetry. Conspicuous for its freshness, its vigour and absence of sentimentalism, this bids fair to be the beginning of a new lyric and epic revival in the hands of the masses. Buddhadeva Bose castigated the urban tradition of Bengali poetry for defects which arose from its cliquishness, and though not too sanguine about the possibility of resurrecting the existing talent among the bourgeois, he indicated that only the actual contact of the masses can bring energy to literature. Subarao Naidu, Samar Sen, Satyen Majumder, all showed the inner stresses of the vernacular traditions.

The presence at this All India Conference of the most representative writers of India and the call to the intellectuals of the country to rally all sections of opinion which have any respect for values, whether these be the traditional values of charity and goodwill or their modern interpretations as order and social justice, and save culture from the vandalism of the priest-craft as well as of these foreign imperialists, the custodians of our art who show us to the world as tawdry spectacles of primitive anthropomorphism and prevent our culture from taking its place among the modern literary and artistic movements of the world.

4. Amended Manifesto of Progressive Writers' Association (as adopted by its second conference at Calcutta, 24–25 December 1938)

Sudhi Pradhan (ed.), *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936–47)*, Calcutta, 1979, pp. 20–22.

Radical changes are taking place in Indian society. The spirit of reaction however, though moribund and doomed to ultimate decay, is still operative and is making desperate efforts to prolong itself. Indian literature, since the breakdown of classical culture, has had the fatal tendency to escape from the actualities of life. It has tried to find a refuge from reality in baseless spiritualism and ideality. The result is that it has become anemic in body and mind and has adopted a rigid formalism and a banal and perverse ideology.

It is the duty of Indian writers to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life and to assist spirit of progress in the country by introducing scientific rationalism in literature. They should undertake to develop an attitude of literary criticism, which will discourage the general reactionary and revivalist tendencies on questions like family, religion, sex, war and society. They should combat literary trends reflecting communalism, racial antagonism, and exploitation of man by man.

It is the object of our Association to rescue literature and other arts from the conservative classes in whose hands they have been degenerating so long, to bring arts into the closest touch with the people and to make them the vital organs which will register the actualities of life, as well as lead us to the future we envisage.

While claiming to be the inheritors of the best traditions of Indian civilization, we shall criticize, in all its aspects, the spirit of reaction in our country, and we shall foster through interpretative and creative work (with both Indian and foreign resources) everything that will lead our country to the new life for which it is striving. *We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today—the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection. All that drags us down to passivity, inaction and un-reason we reject as reactionary. All that arouses in us the critical spirit, which examines institutions and customs in the light of reason, which helps us to act, to organize ourselves, to transform, we accept as progressive.*

The constitution of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association.

1. NAME—The Association shall be known as the Indian Progressive Writers' Association.
2. AIMS AND OBJECTS
 - (a) To produce and to translate literature of a progressive nature.
 - (b) To fight cultural reaction and in this way further the cause of Indian freedom and social regeneration.
 - (c) To bring Literature and Art into closest touch with the people and the actualities of life.
 - (d) To develop an attitude of literary criticism which will discourage the reactionary and revivalist tendencies and will encourage the spirit of progress.
 - (e) To fight for the right of free expression of opinion and to protect the interest of progressive writers.
3. MEMBERSHIP.
Any person who agrees with the aims and objects of the Association and promises to pay one rupee per annum to the Association may become a member by signing the membership form.

5. All-India Students' Conference: 'Students in Session', R.K. Gupta

National Front, Vol. 1, No. 48, 15 January 1939.

15 January 1939

More than 800 student delegates and over 1500 student visitors from all over the country conferred under the presidentship of Dr K.M. Asharaf to make the fourth session of the All India Students Conference the success that it deserved to be. The seeds that were sown in August 1936 bore splendid fruit in spite of growing repression from the authorities and the Government. Calcutta has proved the first mile-stone on the road which the organization will now follow.

Within two years, four sessions of our Federation have been held. The first two, at Lucknow and Lahore, were naturally more or less gatherings of a small vaguely conscious minority. Student problems and local organizations to solve them were yet to spring up, and the student movement with its own demands and grievances, its methods of struggle and the handling of these by wide masses, all these were yet to come. During the two years after Lahore, our movement rapidly came to assume a significant role in the life of the students and the universities as also of the country. Its potentialities were 'apprehended' even by Gandhiji.

During these two years an unprecedented wave of strikes, demonstrations, conferences etc. swept over the country touching even the remotest towns in a spontaneous struggle. These strikes have been mostly for the granting of academic demands, civil liberties, etc. At the same time, instances of political strikes and participation in the political struggles of the States' people for

responsible government are numerous. Almost every town with a high school or college has now a student union, at least in the British Indian provinces. Against growing repression, students have fought with the weapon of collective resistance and not by petitions.

40,000 Organized Students

These developments led to a great rise in the organizational development of the movement. In spite of the sad happenings at Madras (the ranks were soon closed at Haripura) the organizations are gathering greater strength with the passage of time. From an unrepresentative minority at Lucknow and Lahore, we witness the participation in the Calcutta conference of over 800 delegates representing more than 40,000 organized students all over the country. Even provincial organizations, which could not be affiliated in time, sent their representatives from places like Mysore, Punjab, etc. That shows the representative character of the Calcutta Conference.

Events preceding the conference were rather unhappy. In the city of Bombay, in Bihar and UP students conferences ended unhappily. After the Haripura unity, this should not have happened. Against all-round repression (circulars of the DPI's penalizing students taking part in these activities in the provinces of Bengal, UP, Andhra; lathi charges and mass arrests as in Travancore, Rajkot, Mysore, Hyderabad, Bengal, etc.), closer and closer unity for an active programme of work was the central slogan before the communist students. They realized this at Calcutta and that was the great achievement.

Elections and Resolutions

Learning from the experience and weaknesses at Madras, the communist students took the lead in presenting an agreed panel for the election of the Working Committee and for the posts of office-bearers. The weakness of our struggle in these days has to be understood rather than hastily condemned. The election settled, the conference was bound to be a success and we did make it one. The All India Students Council attended by about 200 student workers, showed a keen interest in discussing the resolutions. If the open sessions were a 'tame show' as some would like to put it, it was because of the prolonged sittings of the AISC which discussed all resolutions thoroughly. One point may be emphasized here and that is: it would have been better if the number of resolutions were restricted so as to focus greater attention on the programmatic side of these with a view to activize the student masses.

Resolution on fundamental demands: War, Federation, Spain and China, Literacy, Civil Liberties, character of the student movement and its methods of struggle, showed not only a clear understanding of the problem but they also revealed the urge of students to translate the resolutions into practice. A conscious implementing of these will enable the achievement of a closer unity in work between the students.

Pt J. Nehru made his long-awaited speech in the conference. Unfortunately for us all, this great national leader failed to understand the significance of the strike weapon in the colonial countries, for the achievement of civil liberties and as a democratic weapon for raising the consciousness of students. It is a pity that Nehru should have found points of agreement with Gandhiji in deprecating student strikes, particularly at a stage when the steel-frame is tightening round us and when every form of mass struggle has to be encouraged, as an asset to the national movement for independence.

The conference was largely attended by girl students though they did not take any active part in the deliberations. Conspicuous by their absence were the Muslim student masses. Unity in our ranks must now lead us on, among other things, to bring the Muslim students into one organization along with the other students. A happy feature of the conference was the cultural conference organized during these days. This stress on the cultural aspect of our movement must be laid by

every provincial and local organization, by arranging sports, debates, discussions on literature, formation of progressive dramatic groups, literacy classes, etc.

The Tasks Ahead

The problems before the national organization and particularly before its conscious workers, the communist and socialist students, is whole-heartedly to implement these resolutions, so as to raise the level of struggle to a national plane. For this, a common programme and work are essential factors. Observing Independence Day on 26th January throughout the country with a programme for widening the anti-Federation struggle is a good beginning. Unity has been achieved, but to make it a real and live issue, the struggle must be carried forward. If it does not urge us on to more and better work, Calcutta will lose its significance. Our task today is to prevent such an eventuality and make the national organization of students a living force in the life of the country.

6. Punjab Muslim Students' Federation: 'Let us unite not as Hindus or Muslims but as Indians first and Indians last'

Tribune, 16 January 1939.

A passionate appeal to the students to build up strong character and learn discipline was made by Dr S.D. Kitchlew, who presided over the third session of the Conference at the Muslim students convened by the All Punjab Muslim Students Federation.

'Inculcate the habit of having confidence in your own self build up strong character and you can be assured better days', said Dr Kitchlew, who added, 'I say this out of no spirit of loud talking. I tell you the hearts of the masses are sound. Every heart among the down-trodden is throbbing with the yearning to see Mother India free. The only and the greatest need of the hour is that we should all unite not as Hindus or Muslims but as Indians first and Indians last to liberate our country from the clutches of Imperialism. Every one of you should remember and not forget that we have lived in this holy land now for centuries. Our ancestors were born here and they became dust with the dust of this land. We have been born here and we are destined to die here. How can, therefore, any honest and truth-loving man fail in doing his duty towards his own motherland?'

The distinguished speaker drew the attention of the students to 'the necessity of joining the progressive forces in the country. But before doing that he asked them to learn to live for country's sake and refuse to bear those who had no political principles and who were attempting to mislead them by raising false slogans of Islam or Hinduism being in danger.

'It is not that this religion is in danger or that, but what is in danger is the Imperialism that had held its sway and robbed the country of all its wealth and glory,' said the speaker.

Dr Kitchlew continuing his speech related how British Imperialism had succeeded in using India for its imperialistic designs and how the Eastern countries complained that India had been responsible for their slavery. In India, Punjab, he said, was the strongest hold of sectarianism and he made a strong appeal to the students to break this strong hold.

'India is to become a free country soon but I feel inclined to say that it cannot become free until Punjab is awakened from her present slumber to which it has gone by the song of Communalism which is sung here.' He, therefore, asked the Punjabee young men to rise from their slumber and unite with their brethren to throw off the yoke of Imperialism.

Dr Kitchlew asked the students in general and the Muslim students in particular to make up their mind to play their part in the revolution which, he said, was bound to overtake India. He wanted to assure them that if the Congress or the other progressive forces succeeded in liberating India, Islam would not be in danger. But on the other hand India's liberty would result in the

freedom of eastern countries, and the dawn of a new era for the whole world, for the method of their achieving liberty was unique.

The conference adopted a number of resolutions. In one of those the Federation was opposed and the Musalmans were asked to be ready to make any sacrifice for that. Punjab Government was asked to make Urdu a compulsory subject in colleges and give English a secondary status.

7. Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangam: An Appeal to Youths

Hindu, 17 January 1939.

16 January 1939

An appeal to the youths of Kerala to organize peasants' and workers' unions and to prepare themselves for fighting the unwanted Federation was made by Mr A. Kameswara Rao,¹ Andhra Socialist leader, presiding over the fourth annual conference of the Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangham, at Kodakkat a village in Kasargod Taluk.

Mr A. Gopalan² hoisted the National Flag and Mr E. Narayanan Nambi, Chairman of the Reception Committee, welcomed the delegates. The conference was opened by Mr Abdur Rahman, MLA, President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee.

Mr Kameswara Rao, in the course of his address, urged that the youth of the land must organize themselves. Referring to the work of Youth Leagues, he said that the Indian National Congress was an anti-imperialist organization under which there was scope for several other anti-imperialist organizations to thrive.

Mr Kameswara Rao also dwelt upon the need for organizing peasants' and workers' movements by the youth of the country. They must start shooting clubs in every place so that they might train themselves to defend the country. He did not mean by this that they should practice violence.

The conference protested against the policy of the Travancore Government in firing upon the labourers at Allepey, declared its opposition to Federation, stated that India should not help Britain in the next war, protested against the attempts of the police in trying to suppress the peasant movement in the Kasargod taluk and against the decision of the Collector of Malabar to impose punitive police in some villages and urged the Government to accede to the demands of peasants suggested by the All-Malabar Peasants' Union. The conference welcomed the Prakasam Committee Report.³

¹ Kameswara Rao, Annapragada (1902–?); born at Kanuparti, Narsaraopet taluk, Guntur district; he left studies and joined the army during the first world war, served in Mesopotamia, 1917–21; joined a secret organization of Revolutionaries who were in the army; sentenced to be shot dead which was later modified; released from army and repatriated to India, took part in 'No-Tax' campaign in Guntur district, 1922 and suffered one year's imprisonment, came in contact with the Revolutionary movement during 1924–25; offered satyagraha in December 1926 in East Bengal and underwent nine months' imprisonment, conducted physical training classes for the youths in Bombay, Baroda, Guntur etc., organized secret societies, served one year's imprisonment during salt satyagraha, 1930–31; went to East Africa in 1931 and from there secretly visited USSR with the help of Ghadar Party, 1933; conducted summer school of Politics and Economics at Kothapatnam which was later banned; arrested and later released in 1937; again conducted summer school of Politics at Mantenavaripalem for 40 days; was interned in his village in 1939 but escaped after three months and worked underground till 1942; detained in connection with Quit India movement; was elected to the composite Madras State Legislative Assembly in 1946 from Guntur, published *Ankusam*, a Telugu weekly from Madras 1947–51.

² A.K. Gopalan, b. 1902; education Misson High School; teachers training course in Breman College, Tellicherry; engaged in Khadi Propaganda and adult education; joined salt Satyagraha movement; arrested in Calicut; imprisoned during civil disobedience movement 1934 joined Congress Socialist Party; Secretary Kerala Congress Committee; member, AICC from 1933–40; associated with labour and kisan movements; President, Kerala Provincial Congress Committee; elected President, All India Kisan Sabha many times.

³ A Committee was appointed in September 1937 to inquire into the agrarian conditions in the Zamindari areas in the Madras Presidency. The Committee consisted of Mehboob Ali Baig, the Zamindar of Mirzapuram, M. Pallam Raju and B. Venkatachalam Chetty, representing the Assembly and B. Narayanaswami Naidu, V.V. Jogiah Naidu and A. Rangaswami Ayangar, representing the Council, with T. Prakasam as its chairman. The main issues that Committee was asked to study were judicial interests of ryots in relation to the landholders, collection and remission of rent, survey record of right (including water rights), levies from ryots in additional rent, use of natural resources, that is, commons, etc. The Committee toured all over Madras Presidency and made a comprehensive report in about 15 months. The final report of this Committee was presented to the Assembly by the Prime Minister on 1939 and on following day by T. Prakasam to the Council.

8. Independence Day Celebrations

Bombay Chronicle, 20 January 1939.

Feverish activity is going on among the students of Bombay with a view to organize a complete *hartal* in all schools and colleges on January 26, the Independence Day.

The additional importance attached to the day is in order to demonstrate students' antagonism and opposition to the Federal Scheme. January 26 will, therefore, be celebrated this year by the students as 'Independence', as well as 'Anti-Federation Day'.

This is in response to the call of the Secretary of the AISF who issued an appeal calling upon all sub-constituencies throughout India to implement a resolution passed at the AISF. Conference at Calcutta to observe *hartal* and hold demonstrations on January 26 with the two-fold purpose mentioned above.

Responsible members of the Students Unions in the city are visiting schools and colleges to drive home to students the need for such demonstrations. Hand-bills are being circulated among students. Meetings are also being held for the same purpose.

Talks with individual students show that they are not opposed to such a move. They argue that since Congress is now in Office, January 26 must be declared a public holiday. As this has not been done, students must demonstrate their demand. Besides it is incumbent on the students, they contend, to express their attitude on the Federation which they reject. Bombay may therefore have some exciting experience on 'Independence Day' this year.

9. On the Eve of Tripuri Congress: Socialist Triumphs

Congress Socialist, 22 January 1939.

The election of delegates to the Tripuri Congress is over. From Mysore 55 delegates were to be elected. Except in two constituencies, in all the others, candidates were returned unopposed. Mr Kawjalagi Hanumantha Rao, a veteran Gandhite of British Karnataka was defeated by a young Socialist and the former had to forfeit his deposit. Smt. Kamaladevi was returned from two constituencies and nearly 14 Congress Socialists have been returned from Mangalore. The Rightists used all means to put down the Socialists in the State and some have been even disqualified. From the Bangalore City constituency Comrades N.B. Shankar and S.V. Ramana, two prominent Socialists, were declared elected unopposed along with two others, but the Rightists left no stone unturned to get them disqualified. They were about to come under the arm of discipline on the plea that they were not habitual wearers of Khadi but the majority of Congressmen in the city stood by them and proved that they were habitual wearers of Khadi. Com. Doraswamy, also a Congress Socialist, was elected unopposed from the Kolar constituency. Mr Kurtakoti, Secretary of the Karnataka Provincial Congress Socialist Party, gave a memorable defeat to Sjt Hiremath the famous Gandhian labour leader of Karnataka. Anyway for the first time in the KPCC out of 156 members there will be a solid bloc of nearly 60 Congress Socialists.

Comrade Shankar Kurtakoti, Secretary of the Karnataka Congress Socialist Party, scored a big victory in the recent Congress Delegates' elections. He had two opponents: N.B. Hiremath, a member of the Gandhi Seva Sangh, one of those who were sent to Ahmedabad to be trained in Labour Union work. The other opponent was Chennappa Wali, one of Gangadhar Rao's lieutenants. The result was:

Kurtakoti	605	Votes
Wali	60	"
N.B. Hiremath	4	"
Invalid	5	"
Total recorded	674	"

Those 64 voted were all landholders and merchants.

Leftists in Tamilnad have gained considerably in this year's election of delegates to the Tripuri Session of the INC.

In all working class centres, the Congress Socialist Party has come out with flying colours.

In Madras, the CSP captured five out of the nine seats. Among them, prominent mention must be made of Com. V.S. Somasundaram, General Secretary of the Tramway and Electric Supply Workers' Association. His entry into the Provincial Congress Committee marks the beginning of the penetration of the Congress in Tamilnad by class-conscious proletarian elements.

In Madras, the CSP captured, 3 out of the 4 seats. Our success there is particularly notable because we had to face a combination of all the right-wingers, who stopped at nothing in their propaganda. Leaflets were issued by them vilifying the Socialists as 'Anti-Congress wallas'. They went to the extent of dubbing the Socialists as 'Justicites.' But, the heart of the primary members was sound and they could not be taken in by this kind of patently absurd propaganda.

In Coimbatore town and taluq, the CSP put up official candidates in opposition to the General Secretary of the Tamilnad Congress committee and the Congress MLA, respectively. Feeling the pulse of the electorate the opposition withdrew at the last moment, a few hours prior to the election, and the CSP candidates were returned uncontested.

The results so far received show that the Party has increased its quota on the PCC from seven last year to about 40 this year. About 30 leftist candidates supported by the party have also come out successful.

10. Communists and the Congress

Congress Socialist, 22 January 1939.

Sundarayya's nomination paper for the Tripura Congress delegates election was rejected by the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee on the plea that he was a Communist. The rejection was set aside at the instance of the Congress Working Committee.

[Extract]

In course of his letter to the President, Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, Comrade Sundarayya¹ wrote:

Intending to standing as a candidate for delegateship to the All India Congress, I filed my nomination for the Kovur Constituency, Nellore District. Yesterday the President of our District Congress Committee, who is also the President of the Elections Committee, intimated that my nomination was rejected. The reason stated was that he suspected me to be a Communist, having

contact with the Communist Party; thinking that the Communist should not be in the Congress as they advocate violence, he said he had rejected my nomination paper....

The Communist Party is banned. I am not a member of it and I need not repeat it once again. But I believe in Communist principles. One who believes in the principles of Marx, Engel's and Lenin cannot but be a Communist. Communists do not advocate violence. They believe that when the ruling class use violence to destroy the final fight that takes place for the establishment of a new State, in order to build up a new society, it becomes inevitable to use counter-violence to meet this violence of the ruling classes. Meanwhile, Communists try to develop mass-consciousness by all peaceful and legitimate means. That is why the Communists in the Congress accept the Congress principles of peaceful and legitimate means as a policy and work accordingly.

Dr Pattabhi's Statement

Dr Pattabhi Seetaramayya, President of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, in course of a press statement said:

In the matter of Sri P. Sundarayya's candidature for the delegateship of the Indian National Congress, which means also the membership of the Provincial Congress Committee, I invite attention to the following facts: The fact is, the President of the District Congress Committee Nellore, brought to my notice that the Congress office was being used by a Congressman who had been frequenting the place making it his headquarters and using it for lodging Communist literature, which was concealed in a box in his possession. The president of the DCC thought that it was a dangerous thing for him to allow this to proceed and informed me of the exact state of things. I instructed him to verify the matter in the presence of neutral friends and ask the person concerned to account for it if there was such literature. Thereupon, he invited the president of the District Board, a somewhat moderate person, and a new recruit to the Congress, and three or four friends of neutral complexion and asked the young man to open the box in their presence. The box was found to be full of Communist literature and back-numbers of Communist magazines which were being circulated from that place as centre....

Sri Sundarayya is the head of the Congress Socialist Party, which is virtually functioning as the Communist Party in this Province. Reposing (sic) of Communist literature in the Congress office and making it a center for the distribution and stocking of Communist literature was considered highly objectionable and could not but be traced to Mr Sundarayya's knowledge and to his approval.

When nominations for the Congress delegates' elections were lodged, the Nellore DCC rejected Mr Sundarayya's nomination. The latter came to me for appeal against that decision on the 31st of December, 1938.... He said that he was a Communist, that he was reading Communist literature, that he was getting Communist magazines, but refused to say from where he was getting or to whom he was sending the issues round.

It was obvious from his answer that he was privy to the lodging of the Communist literature in the Congress office as well as to the circulation from there. This was considered a particularly unworthy and improper course for the head of a party in respect of literature which has been declared illegal, and to whose cult he belonged. What was more, appeal petition itself was a strange document. In this document he admits that he is a Marxist and that as a Marxist he believes in violence as the inevitable factor that must settle the issue. It is one thing to sign the Congress creed and say that one does not profess faith in non-violence except as a policy and it is a quite different thing to say that means and ends are not the same and although he signs the creed he does not believe in its contents. When there is an admission like that, it is obvious that the situation calls for notice.

In the Andhra Desa, a series of fiery speeches have been delivered in the past by young men, ostensibly belonging to the Congress Socialist Party, but really receiving their inspirations from the Communist Party in Bombay. The speeches delivered by them from the highest placed members of the party down to the lowest strata, are fiery and are of a violent nature. Some of the speeches have been placed before the Working Committee of the AICC. The work of the Congress workers who are carrying on propaganda in the villages has been made impossible by the delivery of these speeches. Whenever the attention of young men is drawn to these speeches, they ward the point off by saying that they are either CID reports or the reports of interested landholders or of Congressmen who are of a persuasion opposite to their own. Obviously, we must have information from one or the other of the above sources and can only depend upon the veracity of reports emanating from any one quarter and especially from the third class of friends. The Working Committee held that the head of the party must himself bear all responsibility for such methods of propaganda of literature and on his own admission he (Mr Sundarayya) does not believe in non-violence as a creed or even as a policy.

Sundarayya's Reply

In course of his reply to Dr Pattabhi's statement, Comrade Sundarayya writes:

Com. R. Adiseshayya is a member of Nellore District Congress Socialist Party. He is the Joint Secretary of Nellore Town Congress Committee. Till a month back the Congress Socialist Party had its separate office. Com. Adiseshayya used to stay in that office. Only recently he took his bed and trunk to the Congress office and began to stay there, for the office of the Town Congress Committee also is accommodated in the District Committee office.

When I returned from the Rajapalyam Congress Socialist Party Conference, I was informed by Congress Socialist Party members in Nellore that Com. Adiseshayya's trunk was opened on the 28th December in his absence. It was then taken to the District Congress Committee President's room and was kept under lock and key and a watch kept over the room till the President went to Masulipatnam and returned on the 30th morning. Then Com. Adiseshayya was called in and before him the trunk was re-opened. In it there were, it seems, 4 issues of the 'Communist', one copy of each issue, and nothing else.

When I was cross-examined at the Working Committee I categorically declared that I was in no way responsible for the 'Communist' issues being found in Com. Adiseshayya's trunk and that I was not distributing any Communist literature and that I am not the head of the Communist Party in Andhra or anywhere else and that I am merely the Secretary of the Andhra CSP.

I need not answer the charge that Andhra Congress Socialist Party is virtually functioning as the Communist Party. It is nothing but a lie. It is not new to cry down every opponent or Socialist as a Communist or a member of the Communist Party. I thought in India we have had enough of this when we daily read in the press that Spanish Republican Government being dubbed as 'Red' by the Franco agents throughout the world or in our own country when the Congress itself is dubbed as a Communist organization by British Imperialism in 1930-34. I am only sorry that Dr Pattabhi should find no other method except this very crude and exposed one for achieving his purpose of driving away the left from the Congress.

Dr Pattabhi and his associates in Andhra Working Committee asked me whether I have Communist literature and whether I am conversant with the tenets of Communist movement in India and abroad. I said that I was. To their next question, how do I get this literature, my reply was: through post. I did not and I could not play the role of an agent provocateur by giving away the names and addresses of those Communist comrades who are being hunted down day and night by the British spies, for their consistent opposition and struggle against foreign rule.

As for my admitting in my appeal that I do not believe in non-violence, here is the full text of my appeal to the Andhra Working Committee. From it one can find how Dr Pattabhi wants to twist it. I once again declare that Communists want to achieve their Government by non-violence means alone if possible. But they believe that even in democratic countries when the popular forces achieve majority and begin to transform the society, the vested interests will rise in arms in opposition to the legally constituted government, as in Spain. In that case there is no other go but to use counter-violence to put down the violence of the vested interests. But till that final question of capturing the power becomes a live issue, the Communists will develop the movement by all peaceful and legitimate means.

Dr Pattabhi brings 'numerous fiery speeches' delivered by young men in Andhra as proof of my non-belief in non-violence, even as a policy. I do here again assert that Dr Pattabhi bases his version on the mangled reports of police and the vested interests. I am firmly convinced of this after myself going through an actual copy of the police report and hearing Dr Pattabhi repeating word for word from it in the last AICC meeting. For a person like Dr Pattabhi, a pillar of vested interests, it is no wonder if the speeches advocating the rights of the masses against vested interests appear to be fiery and full of violence.

Gandhiji's View

The following letter was received from Mr Pyarelal, Secretary of Mahatma Gandhi:

'Gandhiji has expressed his views on the matter raised by you, in the column of *Harijan*. Having retired from the Congress he does not actively interfere in day-to-day working of the Congress machine. And in any case he could not recommend to the Congress for election as office bearers people who believe in the use of violence as exemplified by Lenin, whether they formally belong to the Communist Party or not'.

¹ Putchalapalli Sundarayya (1913–85): Born at Alaganipadu, Kovur taluk, Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh; educated in Madras and Bangalore; joined a student group in 1925 (active participant of 'Sodara Samiti' while studying in Madras), took an active part in Simon Commission Boycott movement, 1928; joined Communist Party, 1929; joined West Godavari Salt satyagraha; sentenced to two years imprisonment; released in 1931; worked in association with Amir Hyder Khan, 1930–34; organized first State Committee of the Communist Party in Andhra, 1934; again incarcerated for nine months during 1936–37; led an underground life from September 1939 to July 1942 in connection with anti-war activities; advocated for Visalandhra and published *Visalandhra Lo Prajarajyam*, 1946; played a supportive role in the Telengana struggle in organizing resistance against the Nizam's police and Razakars, 1946–48; member, Rajya Sabha, 1952–54; member Legislative Assembly, 1934–64; General Secretary of CPI(M), 1964–76; closely associated with the publication of *Navasakti*, *Prajasakti* and *Visalandhra*; member, Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly, 1978; leader of the CPI(M) Legislative Party in the Assembly; re-elected as a member of the Polit Bureau CPI(M), 1978; was holding the position of General Secretary, Andhra Pradesh state unit at the time of his death.

11. On the Re-election of S.C. Bose—P.C. Joshi

Hitavada, 25 January 1939.

25 January 1939

P.C. Joshi, on behalf of the Editorial board of the *National Front*, the organ of the Indian Communists, issued the following statement to the Press:

'The Indian Communists were the first to give the call for the re-election of Rashtrapati Bose. We voiced the feelings of a mass of genuine Congressmen, who have taken up the demand in every province. We are glad that the Rashtrapati has agreed to contest the elections. Let every Congress remember that grave issues are at stake. Underhand attempts to negotiate a deal over

the federation are going on. The States peoples are being left in the lurch. The Ministers rather than implement the demands of the election manifesto in the interests of the masses, are found suppressing the mass movement. It is sought to purge the Congress of the leftists and further bureaucratize its constitution. The Congress members must cry a halt to all this.

‘British Imperialism has become the handmaid of fascism and is fast becoming weaker and weaker as a world power. Our masses are in the move. Our movement is daily growing at a tempestuous rate if we keep the unity of our nation and move forward to the offensive, victory would be ours. President Bose will be able to maintain the unity of the Congress and keep the Right and the Left together. His recent statements make it clear that he desires a sharp break with the present policy of draft and disruption. His re-election is the first step that every Congressman must support so that Tripura may give us marching orders, and clear out commands for our last decisive battle against imperialism.’

12. Re-elect Mr Subhas Bose: Maulana Madani’s Appeal

Tribune, 28 January 1939.

New Delhi
25 January 1939

Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani¹ has sent a telegram to the Associated Press from Deoband making an appeal to the delegates to the Tripuri Congress to re-elect Mr Subhas Bose as Congress President. The Maulana considers that the achievements of Mr Bose during the period of his presidency have been more than satisfactory. He feels that Mr Bose deserves to be re-elected Congress President.

The statement issued from Bardoli by some members of the Working Committee and the counter-statements by Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress President, have already had their reaction on the delegates elected to Tripuri Session. Messrs M.R. Massani, Yusuf Meherally² and other Left-Wing delegates representing half of the strength of delegates to the ensuing session have recommended the name of Mr Subhas Bose for the Congress Presidentship.

Although the other half of the delegates have not issued any statement, it is stated they will support Dr Pattabhi’s candidature.

¹ Husain Ahmad Madani (1879–1957); educated at Deoband, 1892–99; joined its teaching staff on graduation and was principal of the Dar al-ulum from 1926 to 1957; joined Mahmud Hasan in his pan-Islamic schemes, 1915–16; arrested along with his leader and three other associates, 1916; interned at Malta by the British, 1917–20; joined the Khilafat movement and interned for supporting the Karachi resolutions, 1921–23; closely allied with the Congress movement as leader of the Jamiyat al-ulama; a vocal critic of the ‘two-nation’ theory and the demand for India’s Partition.

² Yusuf Jaffar Mehrally (1903–50); a Khoja Muslim born in a prosperous business family of Bombay; graduated from Elphinstone College, Bombay, in 1925; connected with radical bodies in his student days and took part in the boycott of the Simon Commission; as head of the Bombay Provincial Youth League, which he started in 1925, took part in the Salt Satyagraha; sent to jail for publishing an interview with Gandhi in the *Vanguard*, a journal he started in 1929; a leading figure in the Congress Socialist Party, he worked in close association with Minoo Masani, K.F. Nariman, Asoka Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan, Jayaprakash Narayan and Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya.



13. 'Independence Day' Celebrations

Hindustan Times, 27 January 1939.

Lahore
26 January 1939

A mile-long procession, in which students from practically all the educational institutions joined, paraded the city and terminated in the DAV College compound, where the flag-hoisting ceremony was held amidst unprecedented enthusiasm today, on the occasion of the 'Independence Day'.

Almost all educational institutions had to remain closed because all students came out of their classes to join the procession. Several business houses and insurance companies also remained closed.

Thousands of students participated in the demonstrations. National flags were hoisted at the DAV College, Dayal Singh College, Sanatan Dharam College, Khalsa National College and several hostels and schools.

The management of the Khalsa National College declared a holiday today in order to enable the students to join the celebrations. The students of other colleges marched out of their colleges and went in processions to Mori Gate, from where the procession started.

The National flag was unfurled under the auspices of the City Congress Committee outside Mori Gate by Sant Ram in the presence of a large gathering. Speeches were made by Maulana Abdul Qadir Kasuri and others explaining the significance and importance of the Independence Day.

Dr Satyapal,¹ president of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, unfurling the flag at the DAV College, exhorted the students to muster strong under the Flag to achieve Independence.

Jullundhur

Scenes of great excitement were witnessed this morning in the DAV College, Jullundhur, as a result of the alleged refusal of the Principal of the Institution to close the college.

Trouble started when, after the termination of the flag-hoisting ceremony, the Principal asked the students to go to their respective classes, which the majority of them, it is reported, refused to do. They staged a demonstration before the office of the Principal demanding a holiday.

Students continuously raised slogans and appealed to the Principal to declare a holiday, which the Principal refused. The infuriated students rushed into the corridors, forced open the doors, smashed window panes, hurled flower-pots at doors and pulled out students attending the classes. The situation threatened to become ugly when some students attending the classes, were injured by glass splinters. This was followed by a hand-to-hand fight, as a result of which the President of the Jullundhur Students' Union and two others received injuries. The situation was, however, soon controlled.

A meeting was later convened in the college grounds at which speeches were delivered by Kundanlal, President, Mr Rakesh Mohan, General Secretary, Jaipal, Rashiduddin and others calling upon the Principal to apologise for not acceding to their demand. It was decided to declare a general strike and to picket the college till an apology was tendered. The demonstrators then marched towards the city.

Jabalpur

All municipal schools were closed and the town was decorated with tri-colour flag. The day's proceedings commenced with the hoisting of the National flag and the reading out of the

Independence proclamation at Tilakbhumi in the presence of a large gathering. Another flag salutation ceremony was held in the municipal town hall.

Kanpur

All colleges, schools and the Municipal offices remained closed. The ward Congress Committees took out *Prabhat-pheries* singing national songs. They performed flag-salutation ceremonies in their respective wards in the morning. The flag salutation ceremony of the City Congress Committee was performed in the Shraddhanand Park, where Dr Muralilal, the Congress MLA, unfurled the flag and explained its significance saying that it was a symbol of unity.

Babu Purshottamdas Tandon², the Speaker of the UP Assembly, came here and performed the flag-hoisting ceremony at SD College. In the course of his speech, he exhorted the students to speak Hindustani which was their mother tongue. Referring to the recent disturbance in delegates' election at Kanpur he deprecated the lust for honour among Congressmen. He urged the students to keep the National flag on the college building permanently. He would not recognize, he said, even their theoretical recognition of British domination over India. That did not mean ill-will against Englishmen. He pointed out that nationalism of India would be more democratic, unlike that of Germany. He advised the students to be disciplined and organized. A big procession paraded the principal streets and a public meeting was held in the evening.

Allahabad

The Modern High School was the scene of trouble during the celebrations. A procession of students passed by the Modern High School after visiting several other schools and requested the headmaster to close it. The request was not acceded to. Disorder followed and brickbats are said to have been exchanged between the students of the school and the processionists. Glass-panes were broken and damage was done to school furniture. Several on both sides are reported to have received minor injuries.

The District Magistrate, the City Magistrate, the Superintendent of Police, the City Deputy Superintendent of Police and also several members of the District Congress Committee rushed to the spot and averted further trouble. Mr Farroqi, the City Magistrate, who was the first to arrive was hit by a missile, and some office-bearers of the District Congress Committee including the secretary also received minor injuries.

¹ Dr Satyapal (1885–1954); Born at Wazirabad, Gujranwala district (now in Pakistan); educated at Forman Christian College, and Medical College, Lahore; medical practitioner; gave up practice and joined Indian Army during the First World War; took part in anti-Rowlatt agitation and was deported along with Saifuddin Kitchlew, 1919; participated in Non-cooperation movement and imprisoned, 1921; took part in Civil Disobedience movement, 1930, imprisoned for three years, re-arrested and imprisoned in 1934 on charges of sedition for two years; member, AICC; President, Punjab PCC for many years; Speaker, Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1952–54; co-author with Prabodh Chandra of *Sixty Years of Congress*.

² Purushottamdas Tandon (1882–1961); graduated from Muir Central College, Allahabad 1904; MA in History; joined bar as junior of T.B. Saprui in 1908; in 1914, became law minister of Nabha State but resigned; joined Indian National Congress in 1899; imprisoned in 1921 during non-cooperation movement; President, Gorakhpur District Congress Committee; organized Allahabad District Peasants Committee in 1918; member, CWC at 1931 Karachi session; speaker, UP Legislative Assembly, 1937–38; associated with Servants of People Society; imprisoned during Quit India movement.



14. 'Independence Day' Celebrations in Gujarat and Maharashtra

Home Department (Special), File No. 958, Part 1, 1938-40, Maharashtra State Archives.

Extract from the Weekly Confidential Report of the District Magistrate, Pune, 1 February 1939.

On 26th January 1939 'Independence Day' was observed throughout the District with Congress flag salutations, processions and pledge-reading. The main schools in Pune city were given a holiday.¹ Most of the schools and colleges were closed for one reason or the other. The Fergusson and Wadia Colleges remained open. Five meetings at different places in Poona and one meeting in 16 villages in the district were held and copies of the pledge in Marathi, Hindi and Urdu were freely distributed.

The Pune Students' Union played an important part on this day. They observed this day and also the Anti-Federation Day. They held a meeting in MES School which was addressed by Mr K.F. Nariman.² He exhorted the students to be ready for the struggle against Federation that lay ahead of them and warned them not to be deluded by the advent of Congress Ministries in 7 provinces which was nothing but a transference of power from British bureaucracy to Indian bureaucracy. The DS Party observed the day by holding a meeting in Tilak Smarak Mandir. The pledge was read at this meeting.

Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, Kaira, 2 February 1939.

26th January 1939 was observed as 'Independence Day' in Nadiad town and the 'National Flag Salute Ceremony' was performed by Mr Gokaldas Talati of Nadiad. The 'Day' was also celebrated at Anand, Umreth and Dakor.

Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, Ahmedabad, 2 February 1939.

Independence Day was celebrated at Ahmedabad by holding flag salutation function at 9 different places in the city on 26th January 1939. The pledge of Independence was read and passed as a resolution.

This day was celebrated by holding meeting at Gogho, Patri, Tansa, Morchand and Valukad. At Patri, a 'Prabhat Pheri' of about 25 persons moved in the village.

Extract from the Bombay Provincial weekly letter No. 5, 4 February 1939.

Districts reports show that 'Independence Day' was widely celebrated throughout the Province on 26th January. About 100 meetings, with audiences of varying sizes, are reported to have been held and students observed hartal at Sholapur, Bijapur and Satara.

Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, Sholapur, 6 February 1939.

11 meetings were held in the District to observe 'Independence Day' on 26-1-1939. In one held at Pandharpur Keshavdev of Anjar, Cutch, said:

Our civilization is ancient and endless. Islamic civilization took its birth from an Arab who was brought up in barren sands, ate dates and drank the milk of the camel. That culture is cruel and thoughtless... it is weak and will shortly be destroyed as it is built on sands having no firm foundation.

This meeting was held under the auspices of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu Youth League.

Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, Ratnagiri, 10 February 1939.

On 26th January 1939 'Independence Day' was celebrated at Bhambed, taluka Rajapur, under the presidentship of Hari Shivram Pandit, Khot of Prabhanwalli. It was attended by about 300 persons. One Vithalrao Vichare explained that only one-anna Swaraj was obtained by the activities of the Congress for nearly 50 years and there was still much to be done.

Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, East Khandesh, 13 February 1939.

The Independence Day was also celebrated on 26-1-39 at Jamner, Bilabad, Parcla, Varangaon, Taluka Bhusaval, Bhaloi and Faizpur, Taluka Yawal, Shendurni, Taluka Janner, Chopda and Erandol by taking out *Prabhat Feris*, holding flag salutation ceremonies and meetings. The speakers in all the meetings at these places were local residents except Mrs Minakshi Karadkar of Sholapur at Bhalod. They all exhorted the audience to support the Congress. Mr Rajmal Lakhichand, MLA, in the meeting at Jamner advised the audience to send their application in respect of the grievances about land revenue to the Congress Ministry and to the Collector. In the meeting at Parel Mr Balkrishna Ramakant Deshpande said that the British people should be driven away from India. In the meeting at Bhalod Mrs Minakshi Karadkar said that the Congress Ministry could not do good to people in spite of its desire as it was not wholly in possession of power owing to the British Government. She added that peasants and workers should unite to fight against the British Government and the capitalists for independence.

Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, Bombay Suburban District, 8 March 1939.

Under the auspices of the Students' Union at Santa Cruz, Mr M.R. Masani addressed about 30 students on 25-2-1939 on the 'Task before the Tripuri Congress'. He said that the principles of Mr Gandhi regarding 'Truth and non-violence' should be modified and the Congress should be moulded to socialists' principles, and that owing to a split between the right and left wings of the Congress, Mr S.C. Bose had a hard task before him at the ensuing Congress session.

Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, Bombay Suburban District, 14 March 1939.

Under the auspices of the Bombay Suburban Students' Union, the second and third lectures of the series 'Task before Tripuri Congress' were delivered at Santa Cruz on 1st and 4th March by Mr B.T. Ranadive,³ a Communist, and Mr V.B. Karnik,⁴ a labour leader respectively. Mr Ranadive said that fascism was prevailing in Central Europe as the British Government had to say 'no' to the gestures of Hitler and Mussolini. This was therefore an opportune time to hit the British Government by launching the national movement vigorously. Both speakers criticized the principles of Mr Gandhi and the right-wingers and hoped that the Congress would be captured by the left-wingers shortly in future. The effect on the audience consisting of 50 and 30 students respectively was ordinary.

¹ According to the *Bombay Chronicle* of 27 January 1939, 'Independence Day' was observed widely in Pune. Students observed complete *hartal*, and most of educational institutions were deserted. Some of them had voluntarily declared a holiday. Some held no classes, while the rest which worked were picketed.

Mr K.F. Nariman addressed the students rally this afternoon, exhorting them to have 'no fascism and no Federation'. He reminded students that the struggle against Federation was lying ahead, and asked them to be prepared to resist it with all their might.

At a public meeting held at Shaniwarwada in the evening, Independence Pledge was read.

Mr K.F. Nariman presided over the annual gathering function of BJ Medical School today. A number of students of the school desired to hoist National Flag on the occasion, but the Superintendent disallowed it. A deadlock ensued as both the students and the Superintendent remained adamant.

Mr Nariman warned the school authorities, that unless the students were allowed to hoist tri-colour the function would have to be cancelled. Eventually permission to students was granted, and the function went on smoothly.

Lokshakti, the Maharashtra Congress organ, celebrated its annual day today when people of all shades of public opinion responded to its 'pan supari' invitation and wished it success.

² K.F. Nariman (1888–1948), gave up practice to participate in the Non-Cooperation movement and imprisoned, 1921; member, Bombay Legislative Council, 1923–29; President, Bombay Youth League, 1928–29, and All India Youth Conference, Calcutta, 1929; participated in the Civil Disobedience movement and imprisoned, 1930–32; released, 1933; President, Bombay PCC, 1934; Chairman, Reception Committee, Bombay Congress, 1934; Mayor of Bombay, 1935–36; elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly, 1937, and made an unsuccessful bid to become leader of the Congress Legislative Party.

³ B.T. Ranadive (1904–90); Prominent Communist leader, joined the Communist Party of India, 1928, and was member of its Central Committee, 1934–35, 1943–48, and Politbureau, 1943–48, and its General Secretary, 1948–50; jailed several times; elected to the Central Committee and Politbureau of the CPI (M), 1964; President, Centre of Indian Trade Union, 1970–90; Editor, Marxist Miscellany, 1982–89; publications include: *India's Economic Crisis and Its Solutions*, *The Two Programmes: Marxist & Revisionist*, *The Devaluation Surrender* and *Caste, Class and Property Relation*; Ranadive will always be remembered in India as an innovative Marxist thinker.

³ Vasant Bhagvant, Karnik (b. 1903); Educated at Bombay and Poona; participated in the Non-Cooperation movement (1921); Managing Editor, *Independent India* which later changed its name to *Radical Humanist*; Editor, *Freedom First*; first General Secretary of Radical Democratic Party and Indian Federation of Labour; Director of Labour Education Service (1956); one of the prominent leaders of the Trade Union movement; publications: *M.N. Roy—Political Biography*, *N.M. Joshi: Servant of India*, *Trade Unions in India: A Survey*, *Strike in India*, *Trade Unions and Politics*, *Chinese Invasion: Background and Sequel*, *Indian Labour: Problems and Prospects*, *Trade Union Movement and Industrial Relations* and *Fourth General Election*.

15. Arm in Arm Not Face to Face: S.C. Bose Victorious

Editorial, *National Front*, 5 February 1939.

5 February 1939

The election of Subhas Bose as the Congress President is an event of first-rate political importance. It was a clear-cut issue that faced Congressmen. Against the present policy of blind drift Subhas advocated an all-round offensive against Imperialism. Instead of waiting for events and for Imperialism to make the move, Subhas suggested planned action by the people themselves to hurl down Imperialism. Drift as a policy was becoming unbearable. The movement of our people has been going forward by giant strides, the policy of drift meant curbing this movement, suppressing or seeing suppressed the valued comrades organizing and leading it. The entire leadership opposed Subhas, the majority of the rank and file voted for Subhas. It became a verdict against stalemate and for action.

After ten long years it was a genuine contest with clearly defined issues. For the first time Gandhiji gave no personal lead to the delegates. On the one side was the call to acquiesce and wait for the leaders to do something. On the other Subhas's Plan of Action as a positive move to unite our entire ranks, to seize the initiative and launch an offensive against Imperialism. The rank and file had to make its choice and it voted for Subhas.

Immediately after the Presidential election, a political vote of the rank and file, Gandhiji issued his statement which threatens an organizational crisis within the Congress and deals a stunning blow at the rank file.

The question has been sharply posed: must drift lead to disruption?

Gandhiji has felt aggrieved. He has torn every Congressman, causing deepest pain. Fifty years' work of the Congress is at stake. Vital issues await decision.

Subhas is called upon 'to choose a homogeneous Cabinet and enforce his programme without let or hindrance.' The plain hint is given that those who follow Gandhiji will not serve in the Working Committee. It has been denied that its seven members have already resigned. But this is the direction in which the wind is blowing. In Karnatak, Gangadhar Rao Deshpande¹ has refused

to cooperate with the new CWC. The greatest apostle of non-cooperation against Imperialism is suggesting non-cooperation against his own comrades.

Gandhiji has also suggested that the Ministries may resign 'because they are in disagreement with the Congress.' How can a Congress Minister be in disagreement with the Congress? Has not Gandhiji been preaching all these days that Ministers are not their own masters but soldiers of the Congress? How dare the Parliamentary wing go against the parent organization?

Gandhiji has further advised the whole 'minority'—half the Congressmen, who opposed Subhas thus: 'if they cannot keep pace with it, they must come out of the Congress.' The advocate of iron discipline is preaching gross indiscipline, Gandhiji is the first national leader who brought the masses within the Congress and set in motion the process that has made the Congress the organ of the unity of our people. Must he be in cold blood undo his own work instead of reaping the harvest he has himself sown?

How does Gandhiji justify such a calamitous course? 'I must remind all Congressmen that those who, being Congress-minded, remain outside it by design, represent it most.' This is setting individuals above the organization, it is egoism of the extreme kind and not loyalty to the Congress.

What after all has happened that we must stand face to face, instead of moving forward arm in arm?

Congress members were called upon to choose their Rashtrapati, they exercised their right and elected Subhas. Subhas had proposed a plan to implement the basic programme of the Congress, it has now received widespread support. If Congressmen cannot do this, what are they for?

If we cannot have democracy within the Congress, how can the Congress fight for democracy for our entire people? How can any leadership enforce discipline and command respect if it demands that it must have its way even where the rank and file has a right to declare its own? How would the nation be loyal to the Congress when its trusted leaders hold it so cheap?

Democracy, discipline and loyalty are vital political principles. They are the real strength behind a people's movement. We need these to keep intact and further steel the unity of our Nation embodied in the Congress. They are necessary today more than ever before.

We are passing through the most critical phase in our history. Inauguration of the Federation is being speeded up, reports from Europe indicate a war in Summer, the struggle of the Native States has become an issue between the Congress and the British Government as Gandhiji himself declares, and he has threatened Imperialism with a nation-wide crisis on his score alone. How can we cope with it all if Congress is a house not only divided against itself, but worse—on fire.

Closest possible national unity is the supreme need of the hour. A splitter of the Congress would be an enemy of the people.

A supremely complicated international and national situation demands clear-headed thinking for the final decisions that must be taken at Tripuri. Let none cloud the issues nor indulge in political blackmail. Let us seriously discuss them, from now on, they concern the fate of us all.

Democratic decisions must be sacred for all. All must bow before them. The whole movement must actively implement them. There is no other way of building unity on the basis of democracy.

We grieve over what is taking place, endangering the unity of the Congress, that is, of the people themselves. We think every endeavour must be made to prevent a split in the Congress, for this alone will enable us to initiate a nation-wide movement against the Federation and deal the last blow at Imperialism. The immediate necessities of our national movement demand a United Congress and a United Working Committee.

Let all of us Congressmen concentrate on the political issues that must confront us at Tripuri. President Bose has given us a Plan of Action. We whole-heartedly support it. Let other Congressmen

and leaders improve upon it or give us a more effective alternative. Every Congressman must discuss political plans on their own merits but let none threaten the unity of the Congress and raise dust.

We Indian Communists make a fervent appeal to Gandhiji and all our national leaders to save the Congress from disruption. Neither we nor the Left as a whole is against the Right as such. Between the two wings of our movement we have and would have differences. We have and would have settled them and give them their proper place. The main enemy of us both and of our whole country is British Imperialism. Against the main enemy we must march together, as one army, under the banner of the Congress.

¹ Gangadhar Rao Deshpande (1871–1960); schooling in Belgaum, graduation at the Deccan College, Poona, and law degree from the Bombay University (1897); practiced in Belgaum (1897–1905) and developed an excellent reputation as a social worker and freedom fighter; associated closely with Tilak in early public life; joined Gandhi and pursued his constructive programme with vigour and deep commitment; donated his private estate to the Gandhi Seva Sangh in 1929; president of the Karnatak PCC and ‘dictator’ of the Congress in Karnatak during the Civil Disobedience movement; imprisoned in 1921, 1930 and 1942.

16. Days of Decision: The Re-election of Bose

Congress Socialist, 5 February 1939.

5 February 1939

‘The majority in the Congress is neither of the Right nor of the Left, but of those who desire the complete independence of India,’ declared one of the speakers at the public meeting in Bombay which was convened by the Congress Socialist Party to convey the felicitations of Bombay Congressmen to Subhas Babu on his re-election as President, along with an assurance of the fullest co-operation and support to him.

There was a world of wisdom and meaning in those words and the audience enthusiastically applauded. This we feel is the attitude which we should adopt in estimating the significance of the presidential election.

Our first thought is naturally to extend our congratulations to Subhas Babu on this token of their esteem and confidence which the people of this country have bestowed on him. Undoubtedly it is a great personal triumph.

Our comradely greetings will, however, have little value for the Congress president if they are not followed up with heartfelt support and with a determination to do everything that lies in our power to strengthen his hands and those of the great organization at whose head he has once again been placed.

A Crown of Thorns?

In the situation that exists today the Congress crown may well prove to be one of thorns. Gandhiji’s pronouncement, followed by one from Acharya Kripalani, the General Secretary of the Congress, exemplifies only one of the problems which the Congress President will have to meet. It is true Gandhiji has not said anything new. He had expressed very similar sentiments in his article in the *Harijan* soon after the walkout at the last AICC meeting.

Commenting on Gandhiji’s article in the *Congress Socialist* of October 23, Comrade Masani put our point of view fairly when he stated:

‘The Congress has through fifty years of struggle become more and more a broad national organization giving scope within its fold to different ideologies and to various classes of society. We have all proudly claimed that it can speak for India.

‘If Gandhiji now wants the Congress to cease to be such a national organization,... we shall consider his suggestions carefully. But let them be seen by people clearly to be a revolutionary move to deprive the Congress of its representative nature, to abandon its claim to represent all Indians who desire independence and to make it one of several political parties in the country rubbing shoulders with the others on equal terms. This would be a far-reaching change and I for one would be very sorry to see it take place. So long, we have marched together, Gandhians, Socialists and others—differing among ourselves no doubt,—but yet shoulder to shoulder in action against the British Government.’

Elusive Majority

Beyond this, we need only refer at this stage to only one point in Gandhiji’s recent pronouncement. He refers to those who voted for Subhas Babu as the majority and considers himself to be in a minority in the Congress. This is obviously far from being the case. If the list of Members who have been elected, to the AICC were to be scrutinized, it will be found that those who look to Gandhiji for guidance are still dominant. This is one of the many complexities of a complex situation.

But Gandhiji is by no means the only offender in misreading the situation. There are some on our side also who talk as if Congressmen can be divided into Rightist sheep and Leftist goats. Actually each of these categories covers a very heterogeneous collection of people who enter among themselves almost as much as they differ from members of the other wing.

The Congress today is made up not so much of a Left Wing and a Right Wing as of Gandhians, Congress Socialist, Constitutionalists, Royists, Communists and a large number of people who cannot be labelled at all except as Nationalists in the broad sense of the term.

Over Simplification

To describe Subhas Babu’s election, therefore, as a triumph of the Left over the Right is in our view an over simplification. There were several factors which combined to produce the result and difference in policy was only one of them.

Subhas Babu, immediately after his election, made an appeal for unity and for co-operation which we had hoped would put an end to the hectic days before the election and would assure an era of renewed consolidation of our national forces. Unfortunately it appears that on both sides there were those who would like to translate the cleavages of one electoral contest into the permanent politics of the Congress. If on the one hand one regrets the pronouncement of Gandhiji and Acharya Kripalani one must also on the other hand sound a note of warning against the tendency which seeks expression in the formation of what is referred to as ‘Left bloc’ but what is in reality a Left party within the Congress.

The Left-bloc in the obvious sense of the term is already there. It does not have to be formed. It has grown in response to the needs of the situation. It has had its effect in determining the election of the Congress President. But such a Left bloc works and can work by maximum consultation between the groups and individuals who give expression to militant nationalism.

The Core

With Pandit Jawaharlal, Babu Subhas Chandra Bose and Congress Socialist Party at its core, this Left-Wing has grown in strength as a result of the past four years of steady effort and work. This Left-Wing can only grow if its doors are left wide open and its bounds kept elastic. This is not the time for forming new parties nor for breaking up existing solidarity. Let us rather utilize the occasion for launching into fresh battlefields and scoring fresh victories.

One of the most cheering results of Subhas Babu's re-election has been the telling effect it has had on world opinion. We have left nobody in any doubt as to where we stand—whether it concerns the rejection of Federation, the fight for freedom in the Indian States or the bigger struggle for the complete independence of India.

Let not our success in the presidential election go in to our heads. To attempt to form a Left Party within the Congress with membership, office-bearers and a discipline of its own will, in our view, be taking the Congress as it is constituted today, leave behind results which will retard and not accelerate the process of radicalizing the Congress.

Writing on January 15, we had referred to such moves and had declared 'while participating in ad hoc organizations on specific issues like the Anti-Ministry Committee of Congressmen, the Congress Socialist Party has in the past set its face against any such attempt at creating a Left-Wing organization and we think it will continue to do so.'

Rajkot, Jaipur and Cutch are calling. Unitedly their walls can be stormed and laid low and within a period of months we can even move on to a bigger fight to bring down British rule in this country. Not every so-called Rightist is a moderate, not every so-called Leftist a radical in action. In struggle and sacrifice our labels will lose much of their meaning. The only distinction will be between brave men and cowards, between fighters and shirkers.

17. M.N. Roy to R. Lothwala, 6 February 1939

M.N. Roy Papers, Microfilm (9), File No. LRC/3/7, NMML.

Dear Mr Lothwala,

I am sure you are extremely interested in the situation created by the result of the presidential election. You must be very happy to welcome at least the beginning of the downfall of Gandhism. After all, your life work can not be in vain. But I am afraid Subhas Babu may not have the benefit of courageous support. When the crisis is on us, many may be wanting the courage necessary for grappling with the situation. I am sure you will remain in constant touch with him and let him have the benefit of your advice. He wanted me to be in Calcutta on the 7th, and I am also eager to go and extend him my fullest co-operation. But I have a series of important engagements in this province which will not permit me to leave before another week. Meanwhile I have written at length to Subhas Babu.

I need not tell you that the attack on Gandhism must be continued with greater vigour, just now when it has received the first blow from the most unexpected quarter. But unfortunately, the importance of this fundamental task is not realized by many even among the left-wingers, some of whom are actually afraid of facing the real issue. But we shall have to shoulder the responsibility at all costs. But Karnik writes that he may not have enough money to bring out our paper next week. How can we conduct the fight if we are deprived of the only weapon in our hand? Therefore, I am compelled to approach you with the request to help us carry on the paper until at least the Congress Session. Any suspension in the meantime will be very unfortunate. We are making other arrangements to place the paper on a sound financial basis. I am sure that community of interests will persuade you to lend us the help earnestly solicited.



18. Tripuri Must Sound the War Drum

New Age, Vol. 5, 9 February 1939.

9 February 1939

The re-election of Subhas Chandra Bose as the President of the National Congress has created a grave and critical situation. Never before in the history of the National Congress was the presidential election fought round burning political issues. The controversy which raged just on the eve of the election revealed sharp differences inside the Working Committee which were expressed with a considerable amount of bitterness. Immediately after Subhas's victory came the sensational news of the resignation of the seven leading members of the Working Committee, who had issued a statement opposing Bose's re-election. This was promptly contradicted. But on the heels of this denial came Gandhiji's article which interpreted Bose's election as a defeat for his principles and policy and foreshadowed the resignation of the present Working Committee members by asking Bose to choose a 'homogeneous Cabinet'. Political speculation is rife in the daily press. How will this conflict between the Right and Left develop? Who will win at Tripuri? Will there be a split? This is how the question is posed. Imperialist press is of course gloating over the prospect. 'A compromise is regarded as a remote possibility', says the *Times of India*, 'unless something unexpected happens during the next four weeks and preparations are going on for a straight fight'.

All this is happening against the background of a serious and menacing international situation. If the rapid advance of Franco leads to the collapse of Republican Spain, Europe would be in the throes of an acute war crisis in two months' time. British Imperialism, in spite of its successive 'appeasing' surrenders to the fascist powers, is being driven into a position in which it is menaced more than ever. Today more than ever British Imperialism is vulnerable. If we hit out now, we win. An all round people's offensive is the need of the hour. But this demands unity, unity of National leadership, unity of the Congress, unity of the entire people for a decisive struggle. To achieve this unity at Tripuri is the supreme task before us. Our enemies expect battle royal at Tripuri. It is wistful thinking. They want the Congress to crack through the pressure of inner conflict. It will facilitate their task of foisting the Federation of India. The Viceroy has recently told us how urgent it is in view of the advance of the totalitarian attack! We have to foil this game. We have to evolve unity out of this very conflict which has arisen. This necessitates an analysis of the issues around which the controversy raged.

Issues in the Presidential Controversy

Two issues came up in the controversy. One was political and the other organizational. The political issue was about the struggle against the Federation. Haripura had decided to combat the Federal scheme with all the means at the disposal of the nation. The line of the Working Committee in implementing this resolution has been to wait and drift till Federation was actually on the point of being enforced. In the meanwhile the 'experiment of office acceptance' was to go on. The Right Wing visualized a sort of a constitutional crisis at the time of the Federal elections leading towards a settlement resulting in modifications in the Federal scheme which would make it worth while trying the 'experiment of office acceptance' at the center as well. For instance Babu Rajendra Prasad who charged Subhas Bose of cooking 'imaginary differences' on the issue of Federation visualizes the fight against the Federation thus:

What steps this non-co-operation (against Federation) would take, whether there would be non-co-operation even at the stage of Federal elections or at the stage of acceptance of office after

election, was a matter of detail and tactics which would be decided on the exigencies of the situation then existing.

(*Bombay Chronicle*, 28.1.39)

Subhas Babu on the other hand, in a series of statements which he published in December last, had clearly indicated an alternative course. The most effective way of fighting the Federation according to him was to take initiative now, to give an ultimatum to Imperialism at Tripuri and launch an offensive without waiting for the Federation.

Bose and the Seven

Thus, while there is a general agreement on the issue of fighting the Federation on the basis of the Haripura resolution there is difference in tactics to be employed to implement it. This divergence in tactics however makes all the difference. The policy of wait and drift, when read in conjunction with the out spoken statements of Satyamurti and Bhulabhai can only mean compromise and the acceptance of the Federation. Subhas Babu warned against this tendency and made a fight against it an issue in the controversy which preceded his election. He stated:

It is widely believed that there is a prospect of a compromise on the Federal scheme between the Right Wing of the Congress and the British Government during the coming year. Consequently the Right Wing do not want a Leftist President who may be a thorn in the way of a compromise and may put obstacles in the path of negotiation.... It is imperative in these circumstances to have a President who will be an anti-Federationist to the core of his heart.

While Sjt Bose took his stand on the anti-Federation struggle and on his plan of a action, the seven Right-wing leaders who opposed Bose tried to make out as if there were no differences at all on that political issue. They opposed his election on formal grounds. 'Re-election was only resorted to, in exceptional circumstances. Presidential election should be unanimous.' Bose was accused of setting up new precedents by forcing a contest. They did not want the presidential election to be made the issue of a political vote. They wanted the president to be like the 'speaker' in the parliament, who is supposed to be above party politics. This raised an organizational issue. Subhas protested against the efforts of the seven members of the Working Committee in bringing pressure upon Dr Pattabhi not to withdraw from the contest. He protested against their attempts to influence the democratic vote of the delegates.

Vote for Bose—A Vote for Struggle

Thus there were two issues before the delegates when they went to the polls on the 29th January: (1) a militant plan of action to fight the Federation and (2) the bureaucratic manipulation of certain members of the Working Committee who wanted to prevent the election of a Leftist President. The majority vote for Subhas was a vote on both these points. Personal as well as provincial considerations might have swayed a certain section of the voters; but on the whole it was a political vote. It was a vote for a militant policy in fighting the Federation. It was a rank and file vote against bureaucratic manipulation of certain Working Committee members. It was a vote for a democratic functioning of the Congress. The majority vote cast in favour of Subhas gets added significance because of the following factors (1) seven leading members of the Working Committee had deprecated Subhas's candidature and the raising of political issues in the presidential election, (2) Rajendra Babu had criticized Subhas's views on Federation stating that they were 'crystallized enough', (3) Jawaharlal Nehru had, in a sense supported the contention of the Right wingers that the issue of the Federation was irrelevant as there was no difference among Congressmen on that score, and (4) Gandhiji had not spoken, but the fact that he had not prevailed upon Dr Pattabhi to

withdraw in favour of Subhas and thus avoid a contest was a pointer in itself. That the delegates voted for Subhas in spite of these factors shows clearly that the vote is a definite indication of a swing towards the left. It reflects the militant mood of the Congress rank and file whom the delegates represent and consequently the growing will of the people to fight. Masses are on the move fighting against every form of oppression in the States and in the British Provinces. The realization of the weakness of Imperialism is dawning upon the people. The dissatisfaction with the Congress Ministries is growing. These factors have swayed the vote.

Gandhiji's Warning Finger

Can we therefore say that it was a 100% left vote? Can we celebrate it as a left victory? We cannot and must not. It is not a vote against the present leadership; nor can it be interpreted as a vote for an alternative leadership. They have voted for militant action and a democratic functioning. They want the present leadership to implement their verdict. Gandhiji knows the weakness of this majority. A considerable section of it has implicit faith in Gandhiji. His sensational statement after Subhas's victory is aimed at them:

Since I was instrumental in inducing Dr Pattabhi not to withdraw his name as a candidate when Maulana Sahib had retired, the defeat is more mine than his. I am nothing as I do not represent definite principles and policy. Therefore it is plain to me that the delegates do not approve of the principles and policy for which I stand.

Gandhiji points his warning finger to the rank and file delegate who has voted for Subhas and says: 'In voting for Subhas you have voted against me.' To Subhas he says, 'You have won. Form your own "homogeneous Cabinet" and carry out your programme. You think yours is "the most forward and boldest policy and programme." Carry it out. You have my blessings. But I am afraid the minority, if it cannot keep pace with it, must come out of the Congress and the ministries too may have to resign if you make changes in the parliamentary programme as fixed by the erstwhile majority.'

Subhas's Plea for Unity

Gandhiji's statement opens up a disastrous perspective. It is a challenge to unity as well as democracy within the Congress. If every time a minority whose views are rejected were to take the course of non-cooperation, no united and democratic functioning would ever be possible. It is an open encouragement to the Right-wing leaders of the Working Committee, to non-cooperate with Subhas. It is a provocation to the Left to accept the challenge of an all-left Working Committee. A Left Conference has just concluded its informal deliberations at Calcutta. It is rumoured that Conference of the Right-wing leaders is to meet in Wardha. Is it a preparation for a battle royal at Tripuri and a split? Only a splitter, an enemy of the people, can wish for such a culmination. It is the duty of the Left, especially of the Socialists and Communists to rise equal to the occasion and find out of this situation the path for unity in common fight. Sjt Subhas Bose in his reply to Gandhiji has taken the correct line:

Assuming for argument's sake that the result implies a victory of the Left, we should stop to consider what the Leftist's programme is. For the immediate future the leftists stand for National unity and an unrelenting opposition to the Federal Scheme. In addition to this, they stand for democratic principles. The Leftists will not take the responsibility of creating a split within the Congress; if a split does come it will come about not because of them but in spite of them.

(Times of India, 4.2.39).

Wanted a United War Council

How do we proceed to implement this line concretely? The issue before the country is not whether we have a 'right' or a 'left' Cabinet. The Congress is not a parliament. The nation has more urgent tasks to face than play the game of the Cabinet and the Opposition, however benevolent. The Congress has been and is a fighting organization. It has to be far more so in the future. Each one of its decisions is a decision for the fight for freedom. It needs a united leadership and a united Congress to lead a united people. We have to talk not in terms of a Cabinet but of a war council and a general staff. Decisions democratically arrived at have to be carried out with a military discipline by all in equal measure. There cannot be any standing aside at this grave hour. In order to achieve unity of action and leadership we have to concentrate on achieving an all-round agreement on the plan of action which we have to adopt at Tripuri. Let the Left with Subhas and Jawahar at the head take the initiative in drafting the main omnibus resolution for Tripuri. Let it be placed before the country for discussion. Let it be deliberated upon by the Working Committee. Let there be a maximum 'give and take' so that a united resolution laying down a concrete plan of fight against the Federation results. Pt Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose have to take joint initiative in this matter. They alone can perform the task, in the present situation, of achieving unity between the Right wing of the Congress on the one hand and the Left, the labour and Kisan forces on the other, on the basis of a common plan of fight. This has to be achieved before Tripuri so that the President-elect and the Working Committee are able to come before the AICC with an agreed and a fighting resolution.

Agreed Plan of Action Possible

The central question therefore is whether an agreed plan of fight is possible. As pointed out in the beginning of the article we have to deal with two opposing lines.

The line of the present working Committee has been 'wait and watch till the Federation comes and drift in the meanwhile. On the issue of ministries the guiding principle has been, follow the line of least resistance, no embarrassing demonstrations, and minimum violence "to maintain" non-violent atmosphere.' On the issue of the States the line in practice has come to individual aggressive aid to an actual struggle of the States people.

The alternative line of Sjt Bose and the Left may be summed up thus. Ultimatum at Tripuri to Imperialism, immediate preparation for struggle. More militant policy to be followed by the ministries, better understanding between the Ministries and the labour and Kisan organizations and avoiding of conflict in the camp of the National Front, further widening of civil liberties with counter guarantees ensured by the joint agreement between Congress and the Labour and Kisan organizations. On the issue of States—centralized and co-ordinated guidance and help to the states peoples' struggle through the Indian National Congress.

As pointed out in our last month's Editorial, the one is a line which leads inevitably to compromise and conciliation, through the avoidance of struggle, while the other is a line of a people's offensive which is dictated by the national as well as international situation. Is it possible to achieve a common line of action in view of these differences? We say, yes. Our reasons are as follows. The line of the Right is understood by its rank and file as also a line of struggle. It is understood as a tactic of 'hasten slowly!' With the rapidly developing situation the need for an offensive is dawning upon this rank and file also. The majority vote for Subhas is a clear indication of this change.

The British Offensive

Let us examine this point more in detail. British Imperialism has been playing a loosing game throughout the last year against the Fascist Dictators; consequently it is being driven to an increasing attack against the subject peoples of its Empire. It must defend its imperial possessions with all its might. The continued exploitation is its main source of strength in the coming war. That is why the British Government is taking an increasingly aggressive attitude towards the Indian people as a whole and against the Congress. In spite of the repeated resolutions of the Congress Assembly Party, the Viceroy has continued to extend the lease of life of the Central Assembly—The Central Government is being used as a tool to serve the purpose of the autocratic central federal authority. Vital demands of Indian Trade and Industry such as ratio, reservation of coastal shipping, discrimination against foreign capital, entering into new industries etc., are being turned down. The British Central Government is conspiring with the Princes to smash the states people's struggle for responsible government by staging 'organized goondaism' and inciting communal riots. As Gandhiji recently remarked, the states people's struggle is becoming an issue between the Congress on the one hand and the Central Government on the other. Lastly as the Viceroy recently announced the Federation is not far off. Revised draft of the instruments of instruction have been issued to the Princes and their replies are to be obtained within six months.

Our Reply—Ultimatum

The rising militancy and magnitude of the mass struggle in the British Provinces and the Indian states as well as rejection of the Federation by all parties undoubtedly delayed the offensive. But it has not been stopped entirely. With the worsening international situation it is being intensified. Conflict between the Congress and the Government is already developing on the issue of the Central Government of the states and of the Federation. That is why the time is ripe for grasping the initiative for an offensive for giving an ultimatum of 6 months to the British Government demanding complete independence, all power to the people through the constituent Assembly. The draft resolution must lay down that if the National Demand is not granted within six months, the Congress decides to launch a direct all India struggle, the form of which will be determined by the AICC.

Six Months' Preparation

This draft resolution must also include the following points which lay down the policy and programme of action to be followed during the intervening 6 months.

- (1) Agitation for the dissolution of the present Central Assembly.
- (2) A uniform programme for the states, co-ordinated and centralized guidance and help to the states people's struggle through an AI States Committee directly under the Working Committee. All India demonstrations, organization of relief etc. organized by the National Congress in solidarity with the states people's cause.
- (3) A 6-months programme of preparation for struggle and a unified All-India Volunteer Corps, as nucleus of the national army. Creation of politically and technically trained cadres for the continuation of struggle and organization under the conditions of repression. Actively functioning Congress Committees, campaign for the purification of Congress organization without prejudice to its broad basis and democratic functioning.
- (4) An essential condition for the preparation of the struggle is the liquidation of all conflict between the ministries and the Labour and Kisan organizations. Special efforts have to be made to achieve an understanding between the ministries and these organizations on the issues of agrarian and labour legislations and on the issue of Civil Liberties.

(5) Similarly the state of tension between the Congress Committees and the Trade Unions and the Kisan Sabhas must be replaced by fraternal relations.

(6) Unity with communal minorities, especially the Muslim and the untouchables, through appeal for joint struggle against the Federation. Coalition Ministries, wherever necessary and possible on the basis of the Congress programme of struggle, the granting of all minority demands and the working out of a radical agrarian programme.

Tripuri's Battle Call

We have outlined the main points of a draft omnibus resolution on the basis of which we want Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru to achieve unity between the Right and the Left. We are of the opinion that a serious and patient effort must be made to achieve agreement in an enlarged meeting of the Working Committee on such a draft resolution. The Right-wingers must agree to accept the plan of the ultimatum and the interim preparation. The Left, the Labour and Kisan organizations will be willing to come to a reasonable agreement with the issue of civil liberties. The Left will ever be willing to make sacrifices in the interest of national unity and for joint national struggle. If such an agreement results in an agreed resolution of the Working Committee in the next few days, then Tripuri would be an unprecedented demonstration of nation's unity and militant strength. The people's ultimatum would be given, the nation's clarion call for battle will call millions to attention. Tripuri will turn a new leaf in the history of our nation's struggle for emancipation.

19. Bengal Prisoners Must be Freed¹

National Front, 12 February 1939.

12 February 1939

'The Public are well aware that during the last historic Andamans hunger-strike the whole nation, with Mahatma Gandhi at the head, made a solemn promise that they shall be released. Nearly two years have passed since then: Gandhiji tried to negotiate with the Imperialism but without success.² The Gandhi-Nazimuddin and Gandhi-Sikandar negotiations have failed. Imperialism refused to free these soldiers of freedom. Public opinion has been trampled under. And the worst is that we are sleeping over this issue. All this has led our comrades in prison to think that release is impossible without the final declaration of war. They have taken the initiative themselves.

'But shall we betray our comrades so soon? Have we forgotten the pledge that we made at the time of the Andamans hunger strike? Shall we let our comrades die behind the prison bars of Imperialism? Has their release issue ceased to be the concern of the whole Nation? We have emphatically to say: No. We have faith in our own strength and struggle. It will be a crime for us to sleep over this issue any more. Our comrades in prison must be assured of their early release!'

¹ 100 Leftist Congressmen from every corner of Bengal issued the above statement. They proposed to make the release of their heroes the main issue before the Bengal Political Conference. At Jalpaiguri they met in a Conference to chalkout a concrete plan of work.

² On 13 April 1938, for example, Gandhi issued the following statement: 'I regret to inform the public that the negotiations that I have been conducting with the Government of Bengal through Sir Nazimuddin have not yet been concluded. Meanwhile, I must repeat that all agitation for the release of detenus and prisoners should be suspended while negotiations continue. I must also state that it is not conducive to the success of the negotiations if public demonstrations are held in honour of those who may be discharged. In my opinion, it is more dignified for Congressmen to exercise restraint. I have seen extracts of the speeches and addresses as reported in the papers which do not betray any spirit of non-violence.'

20. Changing Gear

Article by Syed Mahmuduzzafar, *National Front*, 12 February 1939.

12 February 1939

Even those of us with ears closest to the ground must have been surprised by the astounding results of the last Congress Presidential Election. Many of us were confident of the correctness of the line taken by Subhas Bose and the Leftists, many knew that all over the country a broad progressive movement was simmering under the surface, but we did not realize how near the surface it was, how irrepressible it was, nor that it would manifest itself so soon. And especially after the line taken by Gandhiji and his lieutenants the extraordinary pressure placed on Congressmen from above by some members of the Working Committee, and finally the centrist position by Jawaharlal, it seemed most unlikely that the Congress rank and file would go against the 'High Command'. All eyes were turned to the election results, and as they came in little by little, our pulses rose, our eyes opened in astonishment, our hopes revived. And then it was really and unmistakably true: Bose had won! Our countrymen had given the verdict in our favour.

Clouding the Issues

People have tried to make out either that no real issues were raised or that new issues, new to the Congress and Congressmen, were brought to the front. On the other hand it is said (even by men like Jawaharlal Nehru) that both wings of the Congress were always opposed to the Federation and 'whoever wins, Federation loses'. This is only a half truth. Anyone who runs may read that there are sure signs of crumpling up before imperialism, in certain high places in the Congress. Bhulabhai Desai's rambles in London, Satyamurti's long-winded lectures in this country, the guarded attitude of the Working Committee at Haripura and during all these months all point unmistakably to this. If the 'High Command' and Gandhiji were against any compromise with Imperialism, why did they not publicly disown Desai and Satyamurti as the President did? Why did they not publicly rally round Subhas and Jawaharlal? It is true that the average Congressman, whether Leftist or Rightist, was opposed to the Federation, but the leadership was divided, and its division was threatening to demoralize the rank and file.

Did We Raise New Issues?

As to the question of new issues, this is entirely incorrect. What new issues have been raised? The Leftists and Subhas Bose have only said that they want to quicken the fight against the Federation, they want to implement the Congress resolutions, and that they want the Congress to take the offensive for the fight for freedom. Resolutions that all Congressmen of all shades of opinion have passed are to be implemented: that is all. Those who raise the bogey of new issues are only spreading confusion, which will weaken not strengthen our national ranks at this most critical juncture.

Reactions

Reactions to the election result followed thick and fast. The entire Left, Socialists, Royists, Communists, and a good handful of people who are neither Left nor Right but disgusted with the constitutional drift and the spirit of defeat growing within the Congress, have rallied to Subhas Bose. The entire Right leadership, the most influential members of the Working Committee have displayed signs of dismay and even anger. Even Gandhiji has written in most bitter tones, criticizing Subhas Bose. His advise to his followers is even more astonishing (coming as it does from the tried

and veteran leader of the national movement). It is briefly, 'Do not obstruct, but also do not support. If you cannot support, come out of the Congress'. 'Subhas Babu, instead of being President on the sufferance of those whom he calls Rightists, is now President elected in a contested election. This enables him to choose a homogeneous cabinet and enforce his programme without let or hindrance,' says Gandhiji (Statement on the election January 31).

To the Congress High Command, and to the Congress Ministries he has given the advice to resign and come out if they cannot keep pace with the programme. Gandhiji without waiting to see what the line is, without trying to understand what the Leftists stand for, is giving the option to his forces to come away from the Congress altogether, or to sit passive and let the Leftists carry on. Can any one who is anti-Imperialist, who is a Congressman, who believes in democratic principles, consider this advice as being in the best interest of the national struggle.

So-called Rightists are already preparing to follow his advice. 'We shall of course not come out of the Congress, unless of course our principles are violated', said one Gandhist to me. 'What principles?' I enquired. 'For instance, the question of violence and non-violence'. 'My dear man, do you really believe that the Congress is going to become pledged to violence? No one is going to raise the question unless you do so yourselves', I told him. But he was not assured. We must, I think, consider the unnecessary raising of this point, at this stage, as obstruction. Herein lies the danger of Gandhiji's advice. The signs are already appearing everywhere.

Non-co-operation with Us Means Helping Imperialism

The British Imperialists are certainly as surprised as we by the results. But they are quick to adjust themselves and to take stock of all the little cracks and fissures in our National Front, with a view to widening those cracks into unbridgeable gulfs. Thus, the 'Statesman' writes: 'Will Mr Bose's triumph mean the disappearance of the familiar figures of the High Command? Will a new kind of Working Committee with new men now be chosen? Will Wardha cease to be the new Congress capital? For the Congress Provincial Governments, have the storm signals gone up?'

Any hesitancy, any signs of divisions in our own ranks will be welcomed by British Imperialism. In its present anxiety and desperation it will clutch at anything. Imperialism was never able to exploit the Left against the Right, and now no sincere Congressman can wish his revered and veteran leaders to become the unconscious tools of British Imperialism. By following the present advice of Gandhiji, they will most certainly become so.

There is no doubt that the verdict of the AICC will have profound and far-reaching effects on every front of our National movement, on Parliamentary work and work outside, on the Congress as a whole, on the Trade Unions and Kisan Sabhas, on the Socialists and Communists, on the students, even on hundreds of thousands of Indians employed in our various services. Every Municipal Committee, every District Board, every College, every Council and Assembly will look forward anxiously to the days ahead.

Subhas's Lead

The lead given by Subhas Bose and the Leftists is by no means a Socialist lead. Of course Socialists have been demanding such a forward policy all these long years. But this policy in all essentials was accepted by the Congress at Lucknow, Faizpur and Haripura. And it has been reiterated a thousand times from Congress platforms. There is nothing in this policy that goes against the Congress creed or programme. Moreover, the verdict of the delegates shows that not the Socialists alone, but a great many non-Socialists are now in favour of this lead.

What has Happened

What has really happened is this: In the course of the last few years and especially since the acceptance of Offices by the Congress the mass movement and mass organizations have tremendously gained in volume, strength and unity. On the other side, the international situation and the awakening of our people have combined to alarm British Imperialism more and more. World war looms on the near horizon. Every effort is made by Imperialism to defend its interests at the expense of everything else, to prepare for the new war and to crush every form of progressive movement that may hinder these preparations. In India British Imperialism is anxious to push on with Federation before that war breaks out and before the Congress Ministries and the Indian people have sufficient time and strength to offer effective resistance.

Federation has got to be imposed as soon as possible: that is the slogan of Chamberlain.
Zetland and Linlithgow.

Federation shall go: that is the slogan of the Congress and the Indian people. And every day that passes sharpens the conflict on this concrete issue.

The verdict in favour of Subhas Bose is, therefore, nothing but an expression of the growing strength, unity, and anti-imperialist consciousness of our people. In a machine, until the engine has picked up sufficient power, a low gear is inevitable, but when more speed and power have been attained a higher gear, a more direct contact between engine and driving shaft becomes possible. Similarly, in political life, until the masses have picked up strength and organization, a moderate policy is inevitable, but in proportion as the power and consciousness grow, in that proportion the speed of advance is gathered up. This is what has actually happened. The tremendous gain in the strength of the Left forces, the vote for Subhas Bose means not a change in programme, not a deviation from our line, but quickening up of the pace, a more direct contact between the masses (their basic desire and demands) and the leadership. Let us grasp this point firmly.

Unity All Along the Line

The situation though eminently full of possibilities is, nevertheless, hedged about with dangers. Success must not blind us to our responsibilities. The real test and tasks have opened up before us for the first time. We, who have been shouting for unity, have got to fight to maintain that unity as we have never fought before. And those who a little while ago called us disruptors, have got to show how they can pull shoulder to shoulder with us, how they can follow the discipline that a democratic organization demands of them in the name of the people and their struggle for freedom. Our immediate slogan must be: **UNITY ALL ALONG THE LINE**—unity of Left and Right, unity of Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary struggles, unity of the Congress itself, unity between the various anti-imperialist forces inside and outside of the Congress, unity of all Socialists and Communists.

National Unity on the basis of the immediate fight against the Federation is the only guarantee of success: without that unity the victory of Bose becomes a personal triumph, but one barren for the people.

No Non-co-operation Inside the Front

Already there are signs that Gandhiji's utterances are having a disastrous effect on some of his followers. There are statements being issued by members of the Working Committee that they

will not serve on the new Working Committee. There is uneasiness and talk of crises on the Parliamentary front. All this has got to stop. We have to make every effort to preserve the unity of leadership and to set at rest people's panic about the future of the Ministries. The Congress Ministries are not going to resign. On the contrary the Congress is going to make a fresh bid for progressive Ministries in Bengal and the Punjab. The present Congress Ministries are going to push through the election promise with more mass support than they ever received before. And they are going to hold on. They are not going to be driven from office, not even by British Imperialism.

Only the Indian People will Recall Them!

No, the strategic position now occupied by the Congress Ministries shall not be lost, but shall be taken advantage of to the fullest extent.

The States People's struggles must not be slackened, but pushed on still more actively by the Congress as a whole, and the States People's organizations must be drawn as rapidly as possible into the Congress. The Haripura resolution on the States must go.

In the same manner all political prisoners must be unconditionally released and all legislation tending to restrict the freedom of the masses, especially labour legislation, must be replaced by legislation giving workers the fullest freedom to organize and strike for their legitimate demands. Independent organizations of workers and peasants must be encouraged and developed and drawn into the Congress. Attempts must also be made to define concretely the position of the minority communities and they must be drawn into the united National Front for the impending struggle against the Federation.

What Should Happen at Tripuri

There have been some indications that all the Left forces are coming together to chalk out a common political programme for Tripuri and the days ahead. The resolution passed at the Malda District political Conference under the Presidentship of Subhas Babu is exceedingly important in this respect. It suggests 4 concrete things:

1. A Constituent Assembly to draw up the Constitution for India
2. Recognition of this Constitution by Britain and a Treaty of Alliance with Britain.
3. A definite period not exceeding six months within which Britain may give a clear reply to the Indian demand.
4. The AICC to take steps to enforce this National Demand, if this reply is not forthcoming or unsatisfactory.

This is the first indication of the general line to be laid down at Tripuri. Its details and the way it is to be worked out and applied, will form the main tasks at Tripuri. For this, it is essential from now.

- a. That the Leftists define their position and come to a perfect mutual understanding.
- b. That Congressmen of all shades of opinion stand firm and abide by the decisions to be taken at Tripuri.

Fateful days are ahead not only for us but for the peoples of the entire world. Let us draw closer together. Let us pool all our resources, give every ounce of our strength to remove reaction from high places and free the millions of this land and this world from the menace of world war, slavery, degradation and hunger. The unity of our people is the guarantee that we shall be able to do so.

21. A Note on Communist Activity in India

Home Department, Political, File No. 7/3/39, GOI, NAI.

15 February 1939

1. All Communist plans are aimed at the capture of political power. By means of 'United Front' tactics Indian Communists hope to develop a combined workers' and peasants' mass revolution, and to achieve independence from British Imperialism through armed insurrection as a preliminary to the substitution of a form of Soviet Government. Though, by reason of their previous history, certain provinces are regarded as more fruitful grounds for development than others, the ultimate rising of the working-class is essentially an All-India plan. It forms part of each successive stage in the programme that unrest should break out in several directions simultaneously, in the belief that less advanced areas will quickly follow suit. It is also a part of this same plan that the struggle should be conducted according to a definite plan-of-war and assume the form of a military offensive.

2. Indian Communists make no secret of their belief that the new constitution offers an opportunity which doubles their chances of success. Already they have shown, in their recent and many-sided activities, their intention to take advantage of the ideals and commitments of Congress to ride to victory on the back of Congress Socialists, and, in the meantime, to advance their position by meeting each situation in a manner calculated to further the revolutionary rather than reformist tendencies.

3. The present policy of the Communist Party of India is to disarm all existing prejudices against itself as an advocate of violence and blood-shed. Every means is sought to create an atmosphere in which the Communist Party may be regarded as a legal organization, no longer consisting of international revolutionaries but patriotic nationalists bent only on the betterment of the working classes of India. This is in conformity with the policy of communist in other countries, e.g. China and the USA. In pursuance of this policy, Indian Communists have found it expedient to declare a modified programme which, superficially, is identical with that of the National Congress—always pressing for United Front tactics—it is likely that its mere violent aspects and the fuller implications of the Communist creed will continue to be deliberately concealed and even denied.

4. It is therefore first necessary to consider whether the plea of moderation is at all genuine or how far it is merely tactical. Have Communists in India given up their idea of converting the whole country to communism, or are they still hoping to permeate the 'Popular Front' with communistic beliefs? The past history of the Communist Party and their voluminous Party literature affords more than sufficient proof—apart from the ample evidence available from intelligence sources—of the deliberate insincerity underlying the various Communist changes of front, and also shows that behind each recent change or manoeuvre of Communists and Socialists there is the same urge to capture political power. But Indian Communists like their foreign masters have grown in wisdom. During recent months the CPI leaders have emphasized that their first and foremost duty is to consolidate their force so as to capture—under the plea of preserving Congress 'unity' and discipline, and upholding the revolutionary principles—first the Congress Socialist part, and then the whole Congress organization. The Central Committee, functioning, from the Bombay headquarters—Bombay is referred to by one of them recently as the 'Red Capital'—experienced difficulty at first in agreeing upon the methods to be followed: One section was in favour of attacking the existing Congress leadership, hoping thereby to win the support of the rank and file; another proposed that Congress should be converted to the communist view-point, thus bringing over all Congress supporters with them. A middle course has been decided upon since September last openly supporting the left-wing of Congress, with a view to its capture through

the familiar communist tactics of infiltration, while strenuously opposing any 'reactionary' tendencies on the part of the right wing. These tactics follow the (unsuccessful) attempts of British Communists to combine with the Labour Party in forming a 'popular front' for the defeat of the Chamberlain government. The Congress Socialist Party has warned its members against this Communist camouflage and tightened up its own rules of membership in defence. Nevertheless the Socialist groups in Andhra, Tamil Nad, Orissa, etc. are in fact, nothing but CPI units in disguise, and considerable success can be claimed by the CPI elsewhere. The measure of this success, and the present dominating influence of Communists in the left wing, is shown in the Appendix.

5. The adoption of this new policy has led the Communist press to modify its former attitude; criticism is now confined to the so-called reactionary right wing; Communists only publicly attack Congress policy where a substantial element within the Congress itself is also opposed to the policy, and where, in consequence, the divergence serves to emphasize the sympathy of the Communist Party with other 'progressive' elements. Throughout these efforts, co-ordination of all communistic activity by a central directorate is evident and reveals an organization at work, both in respects of its propaganda and the control it can exert over left-wing agitation in general, which is increasing in power and influence. Pretence of community of interest can be quoted in numerous instances to show how selected Communists have been able to penetrate the peasant, labour and student movements. It is unnecessary to emphasize the communistic tendencies in left-wing agitation, and it is safer to regard Kisan Sabhas, trade unions, youth leagues and the socialist movement in general as the active followers, in some cases unknowingly but in others in less blissful ignorance, of the Communist revolutionary path. The term 'Communist' is to be interpreted as meaning not only actual membership of the CPI which, partly owing to its illegal status, is necessarily restricted, but also its numerous sympathizers and extensive following throughout the peasant's and workers' movements.

6. The policy of masking the Communist connection has been shown by a variety of sources to be steadily gaining ground; recent 'secret' instructions clearly reveal that the Communist Party leaders intend to continue with tactics of penetration of the Congress left-wing on an increasing scale. Communist Party members within Provincial Congress Committees, and those working in the Congress Socialist or other 'left' groups, are to have their political activities co-ordinated by a secret committee (or 'bloc', which is the new term) presided over by a leader from the Central Directorate and meeting at regular intervals. Selected 'local leaders' are to be methodically placed in strategic political positions, and also in industry—especially the transport and utility services e.g. electric supply—so as to make their influence effectively felt at times of crisis and in the manner prescribed.

7. Recent events have shown the comparative moderation of their new tactics has enabled communists in industry, and in the trade-union movement generally, to appear before their fellow-workers as *bona fide* trade-unionists, where formerly they were known as mere political agitators and trouble-makers. The policy they advocate is outwardly that of active trade-unionism, with this difference, that they are not concerned solely with the improvement of conditions in industry, but also, and indeed mainly, with the 'political education of the workers'. With this end in view, Communist leaders invariably resist the settlement of disputes, advise strikers not to accept anything but a complete surrender of the employers, and systematically exploit all grievances in order to create among the workers the 'class-hatred' mentality.

8. A move to extend Communist influence is also to be found in the formation of a special department which will concentrate on 'Party education'. The first step in this new educational campaign is through summer-schools and volunteer-camps, disguised as *kisan* schools, socialist camps, etc. The syllabus of subjects to be taught consists of the theory and practice of socialism,

while outwardly it is claimed their aim is merely to explain the land-revenue system to the ignorant peasantry, the reasons for their indebtedness, and generally suggest how rural economic conditions can be bettered. The real purpose however, is to aggravate rural discontent by the speed of Communist beliefs, and at the same time to train a band of discontented 'leaders' who will penetrate the countryside and propagate these ideas further afield. That the organizers of these schools have already been able to claim success is shown by their plans for more ambitious schemes in Bihar, the UP, Madras and the Punjab.

9. More proof of the penetration of the Congress organization in seeking to capture political power, is shown in a Party circular issued last month by the 'National Front' leaders from Bombay enquiring from each Provincial center the comparative strengths of the local Communist group (as a single unit) and other left groups, the extent of Kisan Sabha independent organizations, and the details of right-wing membership. Provincial committees have been asked at the same time to estimate the possibilities of forming a 'Left Bloc', and instructed to submit an 'organization report' indicating which local groups are in closest contact with the masses, the causes and nature of their success, and the influence of each group with Muslims. These, and similar instructions, as well as secret meetings of leading Communists and their sympathizers from each center, are known to have been preliminaries in a general stock-taking of Communist forces throughout India, in anticipation of a 'conflict' which the Right and Left wings, each in their own way, are at one in expecting.

10. In this connection, the support energetically given by Communists in particular to Subhas Bose's election campaign, and Bose's declarations on the non-acceptance of Federation have had for the past six months as their objective the formation of a 'left bloc' which is only now, strictly according to plan, being made public. The programme of this 'Anti-Federation Left Bloc' includes an ultimatum to Government to provide a period for final preparations. The ablest and most active leaders of the Communist Party have been coming about the countryside since October popularizing this scheme which was first tentatively announced as a 'call to Congressmen', and carefully designed to secure the support of the various non-Socialists who are resentful at the slow pace of orthodox Congress policy and the dictatorial methods of the Congress High Command, whilst also covering the Communists' own designs to gain control of the Congress and then afterwards to direct its full power into violent revolutionary activity. Support for the plan in the earlier and milder stages implies non-co-operation in war measures, direct support by Congress of the agitation in the States, expansion of civil liberties in British India, and extension of the volunteer movement—'the nucleus of the Peoples' Army'. In its later stage, the plan aims at a political general strike, widespread sabotage and mass revolutionary methods. The Madras Government made public certain extracts from Communist Party pamphlets last year. The Party's Central Executive later issued urgent confidential instructions to withdraw all copies of the pamphlet in question 'on account of the damage this has already done to our cause'. This explains why the present plans are—so far as is possible, and in the manner of their presentment to the public—cautiously worked, and whatever might alarm or repel potential allies has been carefully eliminated.

11. The preceding notes present in outline the latest Communist Party preparations for an attempt to capture political power. An account of the CPI organization and its centralized Directorate, may serve to bring the picture more clearly into focus and to show how these forces work.

12. The Communist Party in India has been declared an illegal organization. Consequently its 'open' activities are restricted and necessarily disguised. Any compromising 'party work' liable to come within the scope of Criminal Law Amendment Act are being conducted by a secret 'inner organization. A belief in communism, or a mere statement of revolutionary policy, is no offence. Hence prosecutions of Communists are few and far between. Concealment of the Communist

connection, and the 'underground' organization, makes it further difficult to assess the extent of Communist influences at work. Actual membership figures are not stated; these would in any case be misleading. The Central Committee functions from Bombay, which is the headquarters, through the office of the 'National Front' which is the Party's 'legal' organ. Provincial and other sub-committees exist in the Punjab, UP and Bengal—also in Madras, Orissa, Sind and Bihar. The last three are recent developments and more or less in embryo, so that the main Communism centers in India are—as they have been since the early twenties when Communist first came to India—Bombay, Punjab, UP, Bengal and Madras. The CPI is 'a section of the Communist International', and owes full allegiance to Moscow through the British Communist Party which acts as Moscow's intermediary for India. The Central Committee's first duty is to obey instructions received from abroad.

13. There are more than fifty Indian Communists who have been trained in revolutionary theory and practice in Soviet Russia; secret plans to send others to gain the same experiences have very recently been under fresh discussion. In 1938 one young Indian matriculate was sent to Europe, but circumstances prevented his from reaching Moscow and he is now back in India. Others are known to be ready, some with passports, and Moscow is still anxious to train revolutionary specialists for spreading Communism in India as elsewhere in colonial countries. One result of the present international situation has been stated, on good authority, to be the Comintern's decision to increase its subventions abroad, particularly in the democratic countries, that is, Britain and France.

14. Indian Communists, who have for several years now received little financial aid from abroad, have of late once more received a certain amount of regular financial assistance from outside India. This new source of strength, although it does not compare with the early palmy days, is largely due to an Indian students' secret Communist group in England, acting under the directions of British Communist leaders. This group, originally formed by the late S. Saklatvala¹ and which supplied most of the present leaders of the Communist movement, has latterly been revived with the object of promoting left-wing Communism in India, through the student movement and intelligentsia. Its activities are shown to be closely related to the affairs of the India League, the London Majlis and the Federation of Indian Students Societies, and certain of its members are known to have visited Paris during the recent Communist demonstrations against the French Government 'to study the technique of the general strike'. From these same sources, a regular sum has been contributed towards the expenses of the 'National Front' newspaper and the financing of other Communist 'legal' propaganda intended for India's conversion to Communism.

15. Indigenous Communist propaganda has been developed considerably in India during the past twelve months, through a net-work of newspapers and pamphlets in English as well as in the main Indian languages at 'popular prices'. There can be no doubt that the present increase in industrial and peasant unrest is attributable largely to the cumulative effect of this propaganda, and the freedom of press and platform in the hands of individuals whose sole purpose is to preach class-hatred and stir up strife. The most noticeable cases come from the UP; whilst all contain constant and more or less undisguised incitement to violence and the numerous contemptuous references clearly show the deliberate purpose of the authors is to replace the national tricolour with the Red Flag. Foreign Communist propaganda is as much as ever in demand and continues to supply the main source of inspiration, but this cannot altogether be excluded in spite of the considerable seizures in every incoming foreign mail under the provisions of the Sea Customs Act. Locally-printed copies of various selected Marxist and Leninist writings, from foreign editions thus obtained, are being published in considerable quantities, intended as practical hand-books of revolution. These are widely sold at cheap prices and the result is that every element of the Left is

thoroughly conversant with the doctrines and practices of revolutionary Communism which govern their whole outlook.

16. Examples of this type of propaganda, deriving inspiration very largely from foreign publications, are the *National Front* (English), *Karanti* (Marathi) in Bombay; *Sathi* (Hindi), *Ganasakti* (Bengali), *Comrade* (English) of Bengal; *New Age* (English), *Nava Sakti* (Telegu), *Jana Sakti* (Tamil) of Madras; *Janata* (Hindi) of Bihar; *Krishak* (Oriya) of Orissa; *Azad* (Sindhi) of Sind; and the *Kirti Lehr* (Gurmukhi, Urdu and Hindi), *Lal Jhanda* (Urdu and Hindi), *Chingari* (Urdu), *Inquilab* (Hindi) and *Naya Hindustan* (Hindi) of UP. In addition, there are a string of 'locals' and two-anna 'pamphlet series' advocating Communism, produced by such firms as the Agra Socialist Publishing Co. and complete with forewords by leading Indian Communists on how best to translate theory into practice. An authority connected with the Press, and not the Police, has recently recorded the view that these are nothing but 'group organs' and that they—rather than bigger newspapers dealing with news as such—are influencing mass opinion and deflecting it more and more to the left.

17. The Bombay 'protest strike' of November last affords an illustration of these Communist forces in action. Bombay Communists had been threatening a strike from the moment Congress first took office, taking every advantage of the new situation and demanding the full implementing of Congress pledges and the removal of all restraint orders in relation to civil liberties. This enabled local Communists to assemble in full strength, and to install in the workers class-hatred and a spirit of revolution—even against the Congress Government—preparatory to forcing a strike intended as the preliminary to the capture of political power from their rivals. The Textile Enquiry Committee's report, and various steps taken by the Bombay Government to redress labour's grievances took the wind out of the Communists' sails and caused a change in tactics. They therefore revived the young Workers' League and Marxist League, put forward demands including recognition of the Red Flag Union, and started propaganda to cause general unrest. In pursuance of the policy of joining all revolutionary movements and posing as champions of the oppressed, the Communists also organized peasant marches and various 'Days' for example 'Kisan Day', 'Peasants' Debt Cancellation Day', etc., largely in the nature of strike drills. When these efforts were answered by the Government's Trade Disputes' Bill, aimed at maintaining industrial peace and the prevention of strikes and lock-outs, the Communists immediately condemned the measure as a denial of the workers' right to strike. Coinciding exactly with the return of a local communist MLA from Europe—who was known to have brought advice and possibly funds—they suggested a one-day protest strike, believing that a Congress Government would be unable to take any wholehearted repressive action against them.

18. Though hitherto active only in the Provinces of India, Communists have recently turned their attention also to States agitation, in proportion to the scope this offers to 'professional revolutionaries'. The States have always been regarded by Communists as impediments in their way, and their extinction forms an important point in the CPI 'Draft Platform of Action' with the dual object of bringing about the destruction of all remnants of feudalism and linking the States peoples' struggle with the 'struggle' of the Indian masses. District support in States' agitation also figures prominently in the Anti-Federation Left Bloc Programme. It is significant therefore that recent agitation in the Orissa States can be traced both from secret information and the nature of the propaganda itself, to pre-concerted Communist plans exerted through local 'leaders' claiming the shelter of the Left-wing of the Congress. They have eagerly utilized certain local injustices for the promotion of mass revolution.

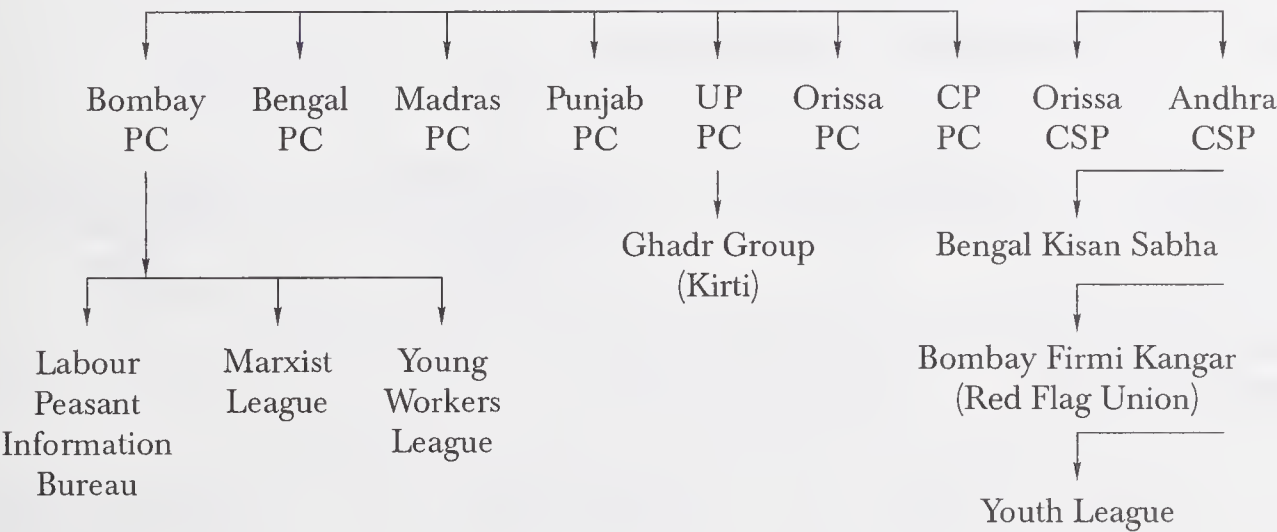
19. The following outline of the recent visit of Puran Chand Joshi, of the Communist Party's headquarters Bombay, to Bengal and Orissa reveals the methods employed to re-organize Communist forces:

Reached Calcutta 27/11/38 to study labour situation and unite the rival Communist groups. Visited mill area and Coolies' Union office: participated in 'National Front demonstration' 30/11/38; Attended Tramway Workers' meeting in Calcutta 1/12/38 and Bengal Kisans Conference 2/12/38. On 6/12/38 attended secret discussion to achieve a merger between Socialist and Communist groups. At a public meeting the same day emphasized concerted action by all radical elements in and outside the Congress in accordance with the 'Call to Congress' (Left Bloc). Attended two secret meetings of Students on 7/12/38. On 8/12/38 at a public meeting of 1000 youths advocated the overthrow of British Imperialism through an agrarian revolution as the first step towards the establishment of a Socialist State. On 13/12/38 appealed for subscribers to the various Communist organs e.g. *The National Front*, *New Age*, *Ganasakti*. Under instructions from Bombay, left for Cuttack 14/12/38. Proceeded to Dhenkanal on 16/12/38 and moved in the interior as a press reporter. Returned to Calcutta on 18/12/38 and advised the dispatch of 'Comrades' to participate in the Dhenkanal Agitation. Sent messages to Nabakrishna Choudhry, Orissa MLA, offering the services of Oriya dockers and Bengal Jute workers as Satyagrahis in Orissa State agitation. Sent highly coloured articles with photographs of 'atrocities' to *National Front* for publication. Instructed Bengal Communists to answer a CPI questionnaire (vide paragraph 9) regarding the comparative strengths of the Left and Right Wings.

Communists in India have a plan as well as a creed. Though relatively few in numbers, they have clever and well-trained workers. Their endeavour is both to promote and fester unrest in every sphere and in every way.

¹ Shapurji Saklatvala (1874–1936): born and educated at Bombay; he was a merchant, lawyer and politician; joined Tata Sons, Bombay; founder of Tata Iron and Steel Works; associated with welfare work in the hospitals and slums of Bombay; went to London in 1905 and became an active worker of Independent Labour Party; member, Communist Party of Great Britain; he maintained association with the working classes of India; also a Communist member, British Parliament, 1922–23, 1924–29 and attended the seventh AITUC session, Delhi, 1927.

APPENDIX
Outline Plan To Show the Communist Party Organization:
Communist Party of India (CPI)
(Directly under CPI leadership)



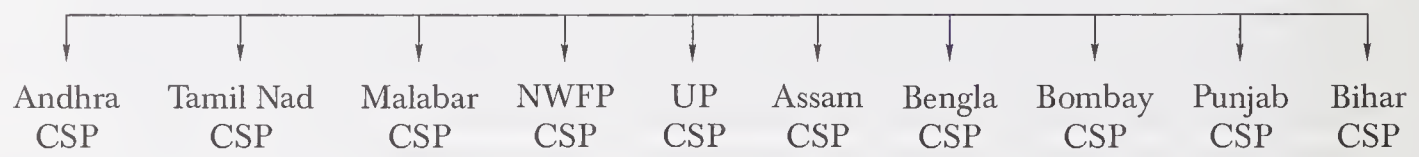
Objectives: Combined Worker's & Peasants' Movement (Under Communist Leadership)
United National Front

Note: District Committees and the various lesser groups are omitted in the interests of clarity. Similarly in the case of M.N. Roy's followers (Royists) Royism is identical with the present CPI policy).

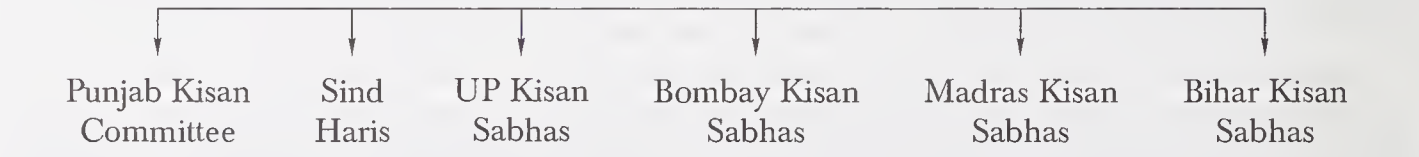
Party's Influence in the Left-wing
Other Socialist Groups
(Signifying CPI influence)

15.2.39

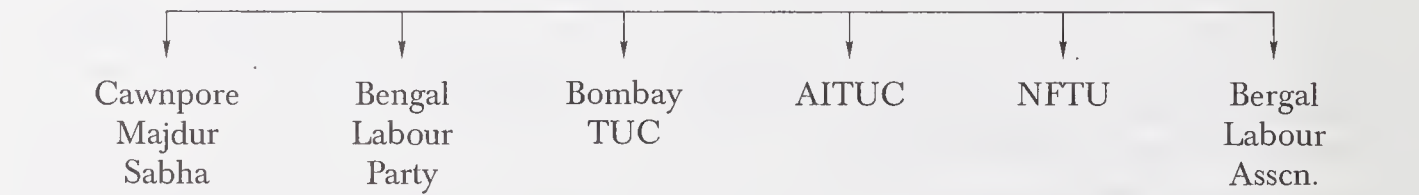
All India Congress Socialist Party



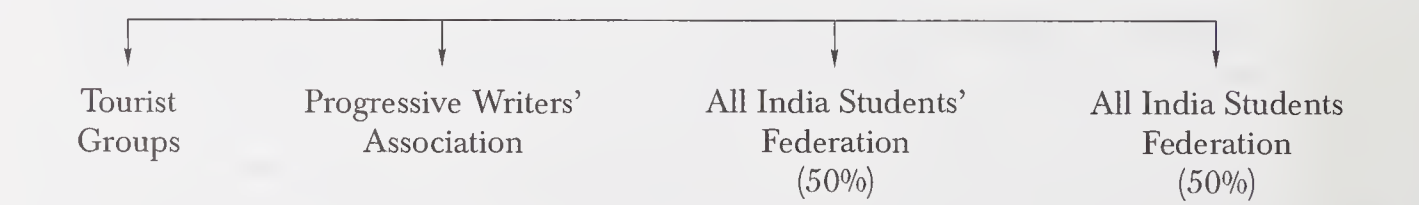
All India Kisan Sabha



Labour Movement

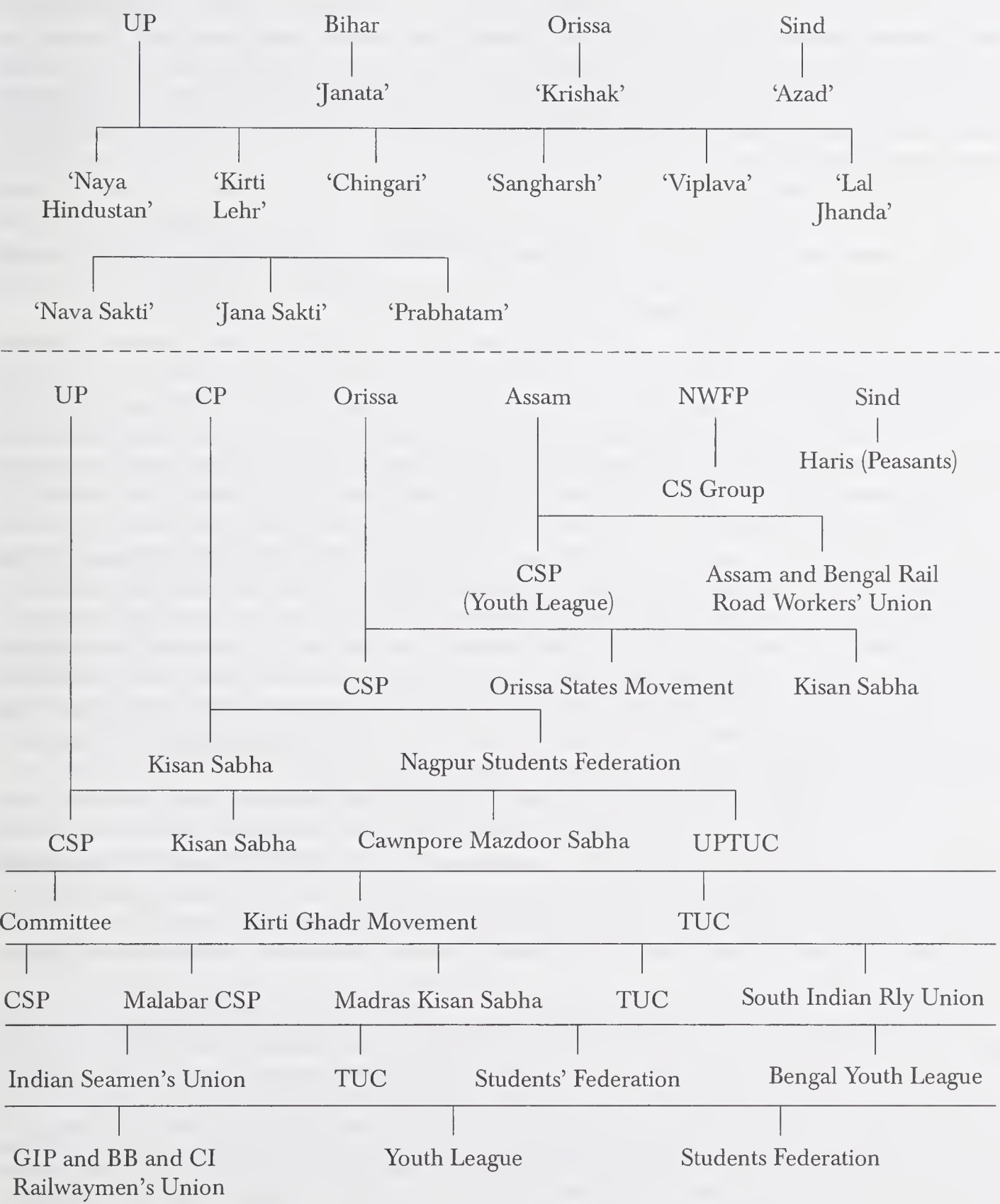


Students (Intellectuals) and Youth Movement



Socialist Unity (to include States Peoples).
(Popular Front)

Eastern Contact (being revived) Malay CP of China
Propaganda (Agit Prop Committee)



22. Malabar's Unique Youth Movement

Congress Socialist, 19 February 1939.

19 February 1939

When I first received a wire from Malabar inviting me to preside over the Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangh, I rather felt shy because I was never in the habit of going in for such honours. As Com. Namboodiripad's¹ wire was a pressing one, I could not also refuse; hence I accepted the honour. Busy as I was in the work in that province, especially the work that I have recently taken up of organizing a model educational institution for children, I had to dash down to Malabar in time for the Conference.

I was new to Malabar and did not even know where the Conference was to be held. When at Calicut station I was told by my friends that the place of the Conference was further away in the interior, it caused me no surprise because all mass movements connected with the peasants originate from the interior and Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangh was essentially the vanguard of the peasant movement in the northern Taluks of Malabar.

The organizer and originator of the Yuvak Sangh Com. A.V. Kuntamba is himself a peasant youth, full of enthusiasm and courage. Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangh members come from the remotest corners of north Malabar and I was glad to hear that there were 800 members and a band of 100 volunteers. Their work is not only political I was told, but they were doing social work also. In summer when in many villages there is water scarcity these youths go round the villages and supply water to the needy people from the wells and ponds miles away of the villages. It seems they also have built small culverts on the canals and mountain parts just in order to provide the villagers with easy access to nearest villages and business centers. I hope this organization will spread not only in N. Malabar but also in the whole of Malabar. There are many things the other Youth Leagues in the country can learn from this unique and hitherto unknown organization.

The Conference was a great success. The conference was attended by almost all the members of the Youth League and about 3,000 visitors. The arrangements were perfect. The volunteers with saffron coloured shirts were found the most trained and drilled soldiers under their able sirdar, Comrade Chandroth Kunhiram Nair. Resolutions on problems agitating the country and north Malabar in particular were passed at the Conference.

I had also the opportunity of attending the Kasargod Taluk Peasant Conference held under Comrade N.G. Ranga's² presidentship. Oppressed and down-trodden peasants organized themselves wonderfully. The Conference was attended by over 15,000 peasants. All these were fed free by the Kisan Committee organizers and I was told that the provisions were brought free by the village Kisan Committees marching in a procession with music and bands.

There is a great mass awakening in N. Malabar and the movement is wonderfully organized.

¹ E.M.S. Namboodiripad (b. 1909); initiated to Sanskrit education very early in life; high school at Palghat; graduation from St Thomas College, Trichur; joined Civil Disobedience in 1932; imprisoned and released in 1933; 1934 joined Congress Socialist Party; took charge of Kerala Provincial Congress Committee; 1937, elected to Madras Legislative Assembly 1937–39; Secretary of Kerala Congress Committee; 1940 joined Communist Party of India, elected to Central Committee of Communist Party of India; elected to Madras Legislative Assembly, 1939; Chief Minister of Kerala, 1957–59; Leader of Opposition in the Kerala Legislative Assembly, 1960–64; 1970–77; when Community Party split in 1964 he stood with the Communist Party of India (Marxist); member, Central Committee and Polit Bureau of CPI(M), before becoming its General Secretary in 1977—a designation he held until 1992. He was member of Polit Bureau of the Party until his death in 1998. He authored several books in Malayalam and English.

² N.G. Ranga (Gogineni Rangnayakulu) (1900–95); born in Nidubrolu village in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh; he went to school in his native village, and graduated from the Andhra-Christian College, Guntur; he received a B.Litt.

in Economics from the University of Oxford in 1926; on his return to India, he took up teaching as Professor of Economics at Pachaiyappa's College, Madras (Chennai); Ranga joined the freedom movement inspired by Gandhi's clarion call in 1930; organized No-Tax campaign in 1930–31 in Krishna and Godavari districts and zamindari ryots agitation in Venkatagiri in Nellore; member, AICC from 1931–51; he led the rythu-coolie agitation in 1933; organized peasant marches in south India, 1933–34; founder, India Peasant Institute, Nidubrolu, 1934; President, All India Kisan Congress, 1936; and its General Secretary, 1938; defied internment order in 1940 and led the kisan agitation in the Mandasa Estate, Srikakulam District; detained in Vellore, 1941–42; and 1942–44; President, PCC, 1946–51; President, All India Tribal People Federation, 1946–60, and was responsible for incorporation of Panchayat Raj and chapter on Tribal People in the Indian Constitution; Founder President; Krishikar Lok Party, 1951–53; founded Land Mortgage Banks and Co-operative Marketing Societies; member, Rajya Sabha, 1952–57; member, Lok Sabha, 1957–70; General Secretary, Congress Parliamentary Party, 1958–59; President, All India Swatantra Party, 1959–69; one of the founders of INTUC; rejoined Congress Party in 1971; one of the founders, National Planning Commission and Convener, Congress Committee on Agrarian Planning; author of various works like *Kisan Speaks*, *Revolutionary Peasant*, *Bapu Blesses* and *Fight for Freedom*.

23. Crisis Developing in Congress: Socialist Party Expresses 'Gravest Concern'

Tribune, 22 February 1939 and *Congress Socialist*, 26 February 1939.

Allahabad
20 February 1939

A resolution expressing the gravest concern at the possibility of Mahatma Gandhi and some of the foremost leaders in the country withdrawing their co-operation in the activities of Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, who has been re-elected President of the Indian National Congress, has been passed by the National Executive of the All India Socialist Party, which concluded its deliberations on the Congress presidential election today.

The resolution states: 'The Executive Committee of the All India Congress socialist Party considered the grave situation that developed subsequent to the election of Mr Subhas Bose as President of the Congress. The Executive was assisted in its deliberations by a number of leading members of the party, who had been invited from all parts of the country.

'At the outset the Executive wishes to make it clear that though the Congress Socialist Party has stood for definite national policies and programmes, and advocated them within the Congress and worked otherwise to further and fulfil them, it has always resisted a division in the Congress into two warring or even rival groups. While the party has attempted to bring round to its views as large a section of Congressmen as passable, its aim has always been to take with it the whole Congress, and not only a wing of it.

'Pursuant to this policy, even during the presidential election leading members of the party, including its General Secretary, made it clear, while supporting Mr Subhas Bose that he was not a candidate of the Left, and that there was no question of Left and Right involved in the election. Consequently, when the success of Subhas Babu has given rise to the apprehension that Mahatma Gandhi and some of the foremost leaders in the country might withdraw their co-operation with the President, the party cannot but look upon it with the gravest concern, and consider it as being fraught with serious consequences for the country.

'The Executive cannot help feeling that it was unfortunate that steps were not taken in time by those who had fore-knowledge of this, to prevent such a contingency from arising. The party supported the candidature of Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, because it considered him to be the eminently suited candidate, not because there had been a large measure of agreement on political questions between him and the party, as also because the party believed, without any question of doubt that, the Congress being a democratic organization, the decisions of the majority would in

natural course be accepted by the minority, particularly when the decision did not alter any basic policy or programme.

‘However, now that a grave situation has arisen, whatever its causes may be, the Executive emphatically feels that no effort should be spared to maintain that unity, which, despite ideological differences, has been the main strength of’ the National Congress, and which has been firmly rooted in undivided loyalty of all groups within it to its fundamental aim and creed, namely, achievement of Purna Swaraj for India through peaceful and legitimate means. The Executive assures the President and Mahatma Gandhi of the fullest support of the party in maintaining this unity. At the same time it also wishes to make it clear, that in view of the party’s share of responsibility in the issue of the presidential contest, and of its adherence to the democratic principles, it cannot free itself from the responsibility that may be consequent upon that contest, except when it may have to be answerable for policies with which it may not be in agreement.’

Struggle in States

The Socialist Party passed the following resolution on the State peoples’ struggle:

‘The Executive Committee efforts its felicitations to the peoples of Mysore, Travancore, Hyderabad, Kashmir, Dhenkanal, Talcher, Benares State, Rajkot, Jaipur, Kalsia and other States for the heroic struggle that they have been carrying on against heavy odds for their economic rights, civil liberties and responsible Government. The Committee also congratulates such members of the party as have participated in the struggle and taken a leading part in it.

‘The Congress has always refused to recognize the artificial distinction that has been made between British India and Indian India and regards India as a single indivisible whole. The objective of the Indian National Congress includes also the independence of the States which means obliteration of autocracy and feudalism from them. The party has, therefore, always been of the opinion that the States peoples’ struggle is an integral part of the Indian national struggle and that it is the foremost duty of the Congress to render its active support to this struggle. The present struggle of the peoples of various states has made it obvious that it is Imperialism which in reality is the enemy of the States people as of the people of British India in as much as it is actively intervening on behalf of the Princes in suppressing a popular movement. The Committee also wishes to point out that this campaign of repression conducted by Imperialism, behind the feudal screen, is part of the preparation for imposing the federal scheme over the country. The party, therefore, emphasizes that the attempt to impose the proposed federal scheme can be successfully resisted only by developing the States peoples’ struggle simultaneously with the struggle for freedom in British India.

‘It is a matter for satisfaction that the spontaneous development of the States has persuaded Congress leaders to respond to the altered situation and take a leading part in the movement. The Committee are particularly gratified to find that Mahatma Gandhi has thrown himself heart and soul into the movement and is contemplating to make it a national issue of first rate importance.

‘It is thus to be hoped that the Tripuri session of the Congress will recognize the need of accepting a policy of active support of the Congress organization to the States peoples’ struggle and will give it a prominent place in its programme of action and co-ordinate it with the struggle in British India. The Committee sounds a warning against the ill-advised attempts made to confuse the common struggle of the States people for democratic rights with the communal question merely because people of a particular State being predominantly to one or another of the communities.

‘The committee calls upon such organization or party as may be in contact with the States actively to help and participate in the struggle of the States’ peoples and members of the party generally to render all possible assistance in this work.’

Federal Question

A further resolution passed by the Socialist Party says: ‘Reviewing the political situation in the country and the developments that have taken place in the recent months and considering them in the light of the Congress policy, the Executive Committee is of the opinion that the Tripuri session of the Congress should mark the turning point in our national struggle in much the same manner as the Lahore session in 1929. The Committee feels that for some time past and particularly since the advent of Congress Ministries in the provinces, there has been a lack of plan in Congress activities and a condition of drift has been allowed to grow. This has been particularly noticeable in regard to the Congress attitude towards Federation. While we have been committed to fight and destroy the whole Government of India, Act our tactics have led us not much beyond carrying on the administration in the provinces and to await the advent of Federation, leaving the initiative in the hands of the British Government. The Committee is of the opinion that the time has come when this policy of waiting and drift is resolutely to be brought to an end. It should now be made clear that the Government of India Act shall not only be combated, but ended in the speediest manner and that the country should forge under the direction of the Congress the necessary sanctions for exercising its right of self-determination at the earliest opportunity.’

‘Considering the strength of the Congress organizations, their increasing and widespread influence, the growth of consciousness and organization among the labour and peasantry as also the developing struggles of States peoples which have already brought the democratic will of India in conflict with the foreign Government, the Committee feels assured that all this rising tide can be led, given conscious direction and co-ordinating effort into a mighty challenge against imperialism in the immediate future. Added to this is the consideration of difficulties in which the British Government finds itself due to the acute international situation. Therefore, the Committee is of the emphatic opinion that the Congress at Tripuri must make a clear declaration of such conscious and determined policy.’

‘The Committee further feels that it would be necessary for the Congress as part of forging the requisite sanctions to co-ordinate carefully the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities in the country and the development of struggle of the States people. It will be necessary to speed up the parliamentary programme and to utilize it in a more conscious manner to develop the fighting capacity of the national and mass movements, particularly of peasants and workers. Furthermore, the Congress should take a more direct interest in the peasant and labour movements and ties among them and the Congress should be strengthened. These various struggles of the people of India should be simultaneously co-ordinated to centre around the supreme desire of the Indian people to be free. Again the States’ people’s movement, which has developed almost spontaneously, should receive on a comprehensive scale, the active support of the Congress. The Committee believes that out of such situation can emerge a triumphant authority of the Indian people that will convene a Constituent Assembly and frame a constitution for a free India.’



24. Mr M.N. Roy's Appeal to Radicals

Tribune, 26 February 1939.

Sylhet
24 February 1939

An appeal to all radical youths in the country to work within the Congress, despite its grave defects, for the liberation of the masses, was made by Mr M.N. Roy, presiding over the Surma Valley Youth Congress held here yesterday. The field of political activity of all radicals and revolutionaries, he declared, was the Congress and though it had grave defects and radicals inside it experienced great difficulties in working according to their will and conscience, the Congress was a mighty instrument created by the masses and it must be utilized for the liberation of the masses.

Presidential Election

Referring to the Congress presidential election issue, Mr Roy said that the crisis which had been maturing in the Congress on the background of the conflict of ideas and ideals had been precipitated by the presidential election, it had given expression to the dissatisfaction against the present leadership. It was too early to celebrate a leftist victory. The left wing of the Congress was still to be formed. Its ideological foundation was still to be laid. 'The point of departure,' Mr Roy declared, 'must be the rejection of Gandhism.'

Federation

Coming to the question of Federation, Mr Roy advised the people to enforce the demand for a Constituent Assembly and to resist the imposition of the federal scheme by establishing a national democratic state in the place of the present imperialist state. He added that for enforcing the demand of the Constituent Assembly, Congress Committees throughout the country would in the course of time have to assume the function of Government in their respective localities. Only then a situation would be created in which the election of the Constituent Assembly would be a practical proposition and in the political crisis thus created, the Congress would transform itself into the Constituent Assembly.

Awakening in States

Mr Roy advised all radical nationalists throughout the country to welcome the awakening of the States' peoples. He expressed dissatisfaction with the present leadership of the Congress in handling the situation, specially the adoption of such futile tactics as individual satyagraha or groups of specially recruited volunteers offering themselves for arrest. He was of opinion that the perpetuation of the feudal order even in a reformed condition was not compatible with the object.

The political programme of the Congress, he said, must include the abolition of the States simultaneously with the replacement of the Imperialist state by a national democratic state. The speaker hoped that all the radicals would press for the adoption of such a policy by the Congress at the next Congress session.



25. CSP Must Save Congress

Editorial by M.R. Masani, *Congress Socialist*, 5 March 1939.

March 1939

All roads lead to Tripuri. Along them will come delegates to the Congress—a very mixed lot of men and women, holding very dissimilar views, and yet all of them equally anxious to serve the Congress and to exercise their rights as delegates in a manner which would maintain and enhance the prestige and integrity of the great organization of which they are so proud.

Few will come with untroubled minds or minds that are made up. Not for many years has such a complex situation faced the Congress delegates, at least not since May, 1934.

I am confident that whatever their group alignments or their political outlook, the vast majority of delegates now on their way to Tripuri share the feeling to which the Executive Committee of the Congress Socialist Party has given expression that:

No effort should be spared to maintain that unity which, despite ideological differences, has been the main strength of the Congress and which has been firmly rooted in the undivided loyalty of the groups within it to its fundamental aim and creed, namely, the achievement of Purna Swaraj for India through peaceful and legitimate means.

But how to translate that feeling into fact? How bring it to bear on a puzzling and apparently hopeless situation this will to unity?

Even those who have played a prominent part in moulding the policy and decisions of the Congress seem to feel helpless in the face of the recent unprecedented developments. Some of us in the Congress Socialist Party feel, for instance, that much of the good work of the Party since its formation five years ago is threatened with being undone before our eyes by the developments of the last few weeks. How helpless then must the ordinary delegate feel!

The Choice

He is told that he must choose now once and for all between two incompatible ideologies, that the time has come when to quote the words of the resigning members of the Working Committee, 'the country should have a clear-cut policy not based on compromise between incompatible groups.'

The Congress, we have all proudly claimed, represents the bulk of the Indian people, consisting as it does of various classes, communities and interests. These different classes and interests are reflected by different political tendencies and groups, each with its own outlook and its own theories, and at least five such organized groups in the Congress today catch the eye: Gandhians, Congress Socialists, Liberals, Communists and Royists. Each group has an ideology distinctly its own and each shares many things with one or more of the others. The first fallacy on which the letter of resignation of the twelve members of the Working Committee was based is that it is possible to sort Congressmen out into two clear-cut groups.

The second fallacy is that it is better that they should part company and that the Congress should be forced to make a decisive choice between them. Far from being a matter of surprise or apprehension, it is but natural that there should be diversity in such a broad national organization as the Indian National Congress. It also follows inevitably that the decisions of such an organization should be arrived at through a process of compromise between the various elements of which it is constituted.

A History of Compromises

Jayaprakash, in his lucid statement this week, has aptly pointed out how the whole history of the Congress is made up of nothing but a series of compromises which resulted from the balance of forces inside the Congress at any given time.

‘Every vital decision of the Congress has represented a compromise,’ he declares, ‘and the need for such compromise is greatest when the time approaches for a big step forward.’

It would, therefore, need to be something very fundamental indeed which should be allowed to come between comrades-in-arms on the eve of an assault. Let us see if we can locate such a fundamental point of cleavage between Gandhism and Socialism, which are the two ideologies dominant in the Congress today. Is it the collective ownership of property which stands in the way of joint work and joint struggle today? It cannot be. For it is a remote issue when we are yet in the thick of a struggle for political liberty and democracy. Also, it may not after all prove to be such a vital point of difference. For in the *Harijan* of November 10, Gandhiji himself declared:

‘I know Socialists and Communists who will not hurt a fly but who believe in the universal ownership of instruments of production. I rank myself as one among them.’

If then it is not the Socialist objective that is an inseparable obstacle to joint working, is it the method of struggle which is at stake?

There is certainly no evidence of this being so. Apart from a suggestion by Mr M.N. Roy, nobody has seriously suggested that the creed of the Congress should be changed and the peaceful method to which the Congress is pledged should be abandoned. So far as the Congress Socialist Party, which constitutes the bulk of the Left-wing and which expresses representative socialist thought in this country is concerned, it has always rendered ‘undivided loyalty’ to the objective and the methods to which the Congress is pledged.

Peaceful Technique

Whatever we may think of Pandit Jawaharlal’s Wardha statement: there is one passage in it which strikes in me at least a very responsive chord:

I have been and I am a convinced Socialist and a believer in democracy and have at the same time accepted whole-heartedly the peaceful technique of non-violent action which Gandhiji has practiced so successfully during the past twenty years. I am convinced that strength can only come to us from the masses—strength either for struggle, or for the great work of building a new world. But it must be a disciplined and orderly strength.

And yet even Jawaharlal has to confess that the gulf between him and his colleagues on the Working Committee has widened, that in views of their clear-cut policy, he can no longer be with them! So it cannot be violence or non-violence that is involved.

There are many of us who have, far from considering Gandhism and Socialism as antithetical forces, stressed the things they have in common and have considered the Gandhian phase in our national politics as one which should logically lead on to a Socialist phase. We Congress Socialists have believed ourselves with pride to be inheritors of all that is finest in Gandhian thought.

On February 5, 1939 the *Congress Socialist* declared:

Not every so-called Rightist is a moderate, nor every so-called Leftist a radical in action. In struggle and sacrifice our labels will lose much of their meaning. The only distinction will be between brave men and cowards, between fighters and shirkers.

This was written of times of struggle. In normal times, in day-to-day work an equally important distinction can be drawn between those, whatever their shade of political colouring, who strive for

integrity and clean action in politics and those who take the short-cut to place and power, regardless of the effects on the movement.

CSP's Responsibility

I think, while adhering to its political viewpoint, the Congress Socialist Party can play a decisive part in the preservation of the Congress organization and its integrity in the coming months. We may still hope that Pandit Jawaharlal's attitude as expressed in his Wardha statement is not final or unchangeable. But should nothing happen to induce him to modify it, the main burden of preserving the integrity of the Congress organization and maintaining the high traditions which have been set during the past few years must fall, along with the Congress President, on the Congress Socialist Party.

Writing in reply to Gandhiji's article soon after the walk-out of the Delhi AICC meeting, I had made bold to say that while we believed in joint action, we would be prepared to accept if insisted on Gandhiji's offer of handing over responsibility for the functioning of the Congress organization. I think the Congress Socialist Party, in spite of its very obvious limitations in manpower and resources, has confidence enough in itself to undertake that responsibility, if it is forced to do so.

Such a responsibility, concerns as it is, can only be undertaken by an organized group commanding the respect of broad sections of the Congress. That responsibility must involve a readiness to resist the sectarianism of the Right as well as the sectarianism of the Left. It involves the necessity of defeating opportunism, in whatever garb it may cloak itself.

The Congress Socialist Party is, next to the Gandhian group, the only group in the country which can today shoulder such a heavy responsibility. It can share that responsibility with the Congress President and those alone who see eye to eye with it on problems affecting the integrity and purity of the Congress organization. It is that spirit and with that confidence that the Party has offered its co-operation to the Congress President.

Meanwhile, Gandhiji is still at Rajkot, which may yet prove to be a key to Tripuri. A couple of years ago on the eve of office acceptance, I had likened Gandhiji to a man in a dark room looking for the key which was not there. But the instinct which has taken Gandhiji to Rajkot has been an unerring one. Who knows but that it might open the door to a path where, in struggle and sacrifice, our unhappy domestic conflicts will be resolved, and we shall once again regain that camaraderie and homogeneity which we appear to have lost after two years in office and of playing at power politics?

26. The Task at Tripuri

Independent India, 8 March 1939.

8 March 1939

The task that faces the Congress delegates at Tripuri is an onerous one. For reasons, many of which have not been explained and some of which—though explained—hardly carry any conviction, the delegates are being asked to make a choice between the old and the new leaders. If it was absolutely necessary to make the choice our advice to the delegates would have been to make an unreserved choice in favour of new leaders and new policies. But we do not believe that the time for the choice has come. The choice is being unnecessarily thrust on the delegates. The delegates must refuse either to be bamboozled into a wholesale endorsement of the actions and policies of the old leadership by the threat of non-cooperation, or to be provoked into an unnecessarily stiff attitude towards the old leaders. All efforts should be made for securing their

cooperation in the execution of new policies to be determined at Tripuri. But if in spite of all efforts the co-operation is not forthcoming, the President and the delegates who have elected him will have no other alternative but to evolve a new leadership for the conduct of the further stages of our national struggle. Tripuri must mark a new chapter in the history of our Congress. It will effect no change in the fundamental programme and policy of the Congress, for, the Congress is already committed to the programme of unadulterated national independence and to the policy of mass action. But during the last two years there has been a deviation from this fundamental programme and policy of the Congress. The Congress has been wandering in the wilderness of reformism picking a plum here and a berry there and has strayed away from the path of national independence. The Congress must be brought back to its original path of mass action, the only road it must travel if it is to reach its goal. This involves a sharp break with the reformist and constitutionalist policies of the last two years. The objective conditions in the country and then verdict of the delegates as pronounced in the presidential election demand such a break and the opening of new chapter in the history of the Congress. Three questions will in the main have to be decided at Tripuri; the struggle against the Federation, the States' Peoples' movement and the Parliamentary programme. They are interrelated. All of them must be approached from the point of view that the Congress has to engage within a short period of time in a decisive struggle against imperialism for the capture of political power. This will bring to the forefront another question, the question of the internal organization of the Congress. The Congress as it is organized today will not be able either to wage the struggle successfully or to assume the powers of government after the successful termination of the struggle. It is high time that it is organized as a well-knit disciplined revolutionary peoples' party with a countrywide network of live functioning local committees and a vast army of politically-conscious, intelligent and self-sacrificing workers. The resolutions contained in a manifesto sponsored by M.N. Roy and a number of Bengal ex-State Prisoners and endorsed by a large number of Congressmen all over the country, which we published last week, give a clear and definite lead on all these issues of the moment. We commend those resolutions to the Congress delegates assembled at Tripuri and look up to them to inaugurate a new era in the Congress politics by the adoption of these resolutions.

27. Lift the Ban

Article by Muzaffar Ahmad, *National Front*, 12 March 1939.

12 March 1939

Anti-Imperialist India goes again into session at Tripuri and we feel called upon once more to raise the demand for the legalization of the Communist Party of India.

The people of our country are entering upon a decisive stage in the struggle for the overthrow of imperialism and for the achievement of complete independence. At Tripuri the most momentous issues will be decided and perhaps we have reached a turning point in the history of our struggle as sharp, but on a much higher plane, as the Lahore Session in 1929. Nobody can doubt that we are about to enter a new period of decisive struggle. The question is: are we to enter the battle-field in full force, utilizing every unit of our strength to the utmost against the most powerful enemy on earth, or are we to fight with weapons and forces chosen for us by our enemies? At the time of the last great Civil Disobedience movement this is precisely what imperialism succeeded in doing by its single dastardly act, since become notorious, of its arrest of the most vigorous section of the Trade Union movement leadership in the Meerut Case. At one stroke the rising working class, on the threshold of its mass entry into the national struggle for freedom, was beheaded. That was the

most crushing defeat which the wily, cunning and ruthless enemy sought to inflict on the anti-imperialist forces at the outset.

Since those days the entire situation has changed. A new spirit animates our nation, the democratic spirit is aboard. At Karachi the Congress, the largest, most representative and most powerful national anti-imperialist organization made the democratic rights of freedom of speech, press, platform and organization a fundamental and organic part of its programme. On its basis mighty sections of the masses have entered the arena of struggle, in particular the workers and peasants and their organizations. As an old Communist I think I can state that Communists all over the country, despite the most vicious repression exercised against them daily in a thousand ways by our national enemy—beginning long before Meerut and culminating in the ban on the Communist Party in July 1934 and continued ever since—have striven amongst the people in their mass organizations, have participated stubbornly and bravely for the day to day rights of the masses at Cawnpore, at Bombay, in Bengal. They have consistently stood as the most vigorous champions of the anti-imperialist struggle, they have advocated the slogan of Constituent Assembly, of death to the Federation, of taking up, leading and coordinating the freedom struggle of the people of the States and above all they have proclaimed the absolute necessity of the United National Front and have worked for its achievement with might and main.

The Communists do not hide their aims
they want to be judged by their actions.

The same dark forces which are strangling our nation of 350 million people have felt their weight in combat all over the world. The Communists guide the destinies of the biggest country on the earth, the mighty Soviet Union, in which in a short period of 22 years the greatest and most unprecedented uplift of the people, economic and spiritual, has taken place in all the history of mankind, and today it is ruled by the freest and most completely democratic constitution in the world.

The Soviet Union has become the main pillar of peace between nations.

The role of the Communists in China has become world famous. If the 400 millions of the Chinese people find themselves united today, it is due to the historic labours of the Communists of China. No less a person than the greatest Chinese of modern times, Sun Yat Sen, father of his people, recognized this when he laid down his principles and policy. Despite the inhuman odds against which the Communist Party of China struggled, today, China fights under the banner of the United National Front. If the Japanese militarists encounter stubborn resistance to their invasion and murder, equal honour goes to the Chinese Red Army, now a part of the National Army, together with other sections of the Chinese forces. In every country of the world, wherever the battle has raged thickest, in heroic Spain, for instance, the Communists have fearlessly manned the ramparts of democracy, freedom and national liberation.

To deny democratic rights to them in India is to commit a crime against the principles of democracy, to behead the working class and the exploited masses, to deprive the national struggle for freedom and emancipation of comrades trustworthy to the end, of an army which never falters and which never hesitates to pay the supreme sacrifice.

I think it is the most urgent matter involving the interests of the people of India, of the Congress, both from the point of view of Civil Liberty and from the urgent need of the anti-Imperialist national liberation movement to see that the monstrous ban on the Communist Party is lifted immediately.

Democratic India! Raise your full-throated strong voice for vindicating your rights! For choosing your weapons!

Let us all with one accord demand: 'Lift the Ban!'

28. National Crisis: The Way Out

Article by A.K. Ghosh¹, *National Front*, 12 March 1939.

12 March 1939

The Tripuri session of the National Congress meets in the midst of a crisis unprecedented in the history of our national movement—a crisis that threatens to undo all the gains registered by the Nation during the last twenty years and destroy the unity and integrity of the Congress. The rapid march of events since the fateful 29th of January when the Presidential Election took place has bewildered the Nation. But a month ago everything seemed moving normally. With its four million members, with its Ministries in eight out of eleven provinces, with hundreds of District Boards and Municipalities under its effective control, with its tremendous and rapidly growing influence, the Congress inspired fear in the mightiest Imperialism of the world, was looked upon as the symbol of National unity. Today there is jubilation in the camp of the enemies, consternation in the camp of the people. Nothing short of a split stares us in the face, a split which, though at present confined only to the leadership, is bound to disintegrate the Congress as a whole unless rapidly healed.

A Superficial Analysis

In the storm of controversy raging round the issue of the Presidential Election and the propriety of the statements issued by Sjt Subhas Bose and his erstwhile colleagues there is a tendency to cloud the essentials and focus attention on non-essentials. No less a leader of the Left than Pandit Jawaharlal had declared before the election that no principles were involved in the contest. It is being suggested in certain quarters that the main cause of the crisis are the baseless allegations made by the President against his colleagues, that but for these allegations the crisis would not have come.

That such an estimation of the crisis is superficial and fails to take account of the underlying causes is borne out by the statement issued by Mahatma Gandhi after the Election and the letter of resignation of the 12 members of the Working Committee. All Congressmen, all who desire the freedom of the country, would deplore the present crisis and would stress on the imperative need for bridging the rapidly widening gulf. In order to do this, however, it is not enough to merely stress on the need for unity and mutual confidence. It is necessary to understand the real nature of the present crisis. It is necessary to destroy the seeds of disunity.

Congress on the Path of Struggle

An unbridgeable gulf separates the Congress of today from the Congress as it was twenty years ago. The new Congress rose in 1920 in the midst of a mass movement of unprecedented dimensions and drew its strength from the people. The movement failed to attain its objective but left its indelible impress on the Congress. Old traditions were shattered, new traditions were created. The mass movements of 1930 and 1932 further developed the process and after the temporary stagnation that followed the defeat of the second Civil Disobedience movement the Congress emerged more powerful than ever and has since progressively become the united front of the Indian people for national liberation.

Unity of the entire people for uncompromising struggle against Imperialism was the keynote of Nehru's Presidential Address at Lucknow. The realization of that unity under the banner of the Congress, increasing identification of the Congress with the workers and peasants struggles were the tasks he set before the Nation.

Even the partial working out of the line resulted in an immense accession of strength to the Congress during the next one year.

A New Note

A new note was rung by Gandhiji immediately after the acceptance of office by the Congress—a note strangely out of consonance with the fighting traditions of the Congress and with the declared opposition of the Congress to the entire Slave Constitution. He declared office acceptance to be ‘a serious attempt on the one hand to avoid a bloody revolution and on the other to avoid mass Civil Disobedience movement on a scale hitherto unattempted’. What Gandhiji visualized was the gradual fading away of Imperialism as a result of the ‘proper’ working of Ministries. This line of action ruled out mass struggle in any form for the attainment of independence, in the period that followed.

Congress on the Rails of Constitutionalism

The organization which rose in the midst of struggle was sought to be run on the rails of constitutionalism. The limitations imposed on Provincial Autonomy by the Government of India Act were not to be shattered, but popular demands to be confined within those limitations. The gradual shifting of the centre of gravity from Congress organizations to Congress Ministries and the emergence of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee as the *de facto* supreme organ of the Congress were the inevitable organizational counter parts of this political line.

A Nation once awakened cannot, however, lulled to sleep with palliatives. The forces of struggle unleashed by the Election campaign and the triumph of the Congress at the polls were in themselves too powerful to be held back by tardy reforms. The National leadership failed to assess the situation correctly and ascribed mass actions in the form of peasant marches, gigantic strike struggles, etc. to the work of ‘subversive’ elements.

Two Tendencies

Within the national front two tendencies battled for supremacy—one demanding the utilization of Ministries for strengthening the mass struggle, for active support to the States people, for preparing the Nation for a victorious onslaught against Imperialism, against the entire Slave Constitution; the other discouraging every mass action following the line of least resistance with regard to the opposition of vested interests to popular demands, striving to avoid conflict with the bureaucracy and even upholding imperialist violence against the people in the name of non-violence, refusing to organize resistance to the Federation, isolating the States people’s movement.

The Delhi Walk-out

Rumblings of the coming storm were audible at the AICC meeting held in September 1938 at Delhi, when the entire Left walked out in protest against the notorious Civil Liberties resolution sponsored by the Working Committee. The walk-out presaged the present crisis. A stage had been reached when the policy of drift could not be continued without splitting the Congress, without purging the Congress of all elements that demanded adherence to the Congress programme.

The National leadership once again failed to read the situation, failed to take necessary steps to bridge the gulf. Gandhiji in his article on the walk-out stressed on the need for purging or splitting the Congress, instead of uniting all who stood for freedom.

The question that Delhi posed sharply before the Nation was: Shall the policy of drift be continued leading to disruption of the Congress or shall the Left and the Right—the entire National forces—unite for a forward move?

The same question has been posed by the present crisis which though of unprecedented magnitude is but the logical culmination of the policy of drift, and the consequent sharpening of conflict between the two tendencies.

Is Split Inevitable?

Have we reached the parting of ways? Does the situation demand a new leadership, a 'homogeneous' Cabinet?

To these questions our reply is an emphatic 'No'. While it is necessary to understand the real nature of the present crisis, to realise its seriousness, it is disastrous to conclude that the Nation has voted for a new leadership, that the differences which have come to a head are irreconcilable. What the Nation has demanded is a policy of advance, planned offensive against Imperialism. But this policy can be carried out, this offensive prepared for and launched only by a united Congress.

It is undoubtedly true that the continuation of the present policy of drift would lead to disintegration and defeat. But it is equally true that the alternative policy—the policy of all-round advance—can be carried out successfully only with the backing of the entire Congress.

The very mass movement whose growth and the divergent attitude towards it which lie at the root of the crisis, also show the way to unity. This unity must be achieved to take the movement forward.

The Way to Unity

And the basis for such unity already exists. The opposition of the Nation has not made Imperialism abandon or even modify the Federal scheme. While preparing for the imposition of the Federation, Imperialism continues to maintain the present autocratic Central Government which rides roughshod over the will of the people.

Everywhere the masses are on the move. The States people's movement has assumed gigantic proportions and has shattered the basis of the non-intervention policy. Even the most backward sections of workers and peasants have been waging heroic battles for winning democratic and economic rights.

The need for the hour is to coordinate these struggles, support them wholeheartedly and develop a planned offensive on their basis against the Federal scheme, against the autocratic Central Government, against the entire Slave Constitution, for National freedom.

Unity on this basis alone shall be real unity. This unity can and must be achieved.

The alternative to unity and advance are disruption and ultimate defeat, the breakup of the Congress, the tightening of the imperialist stranglehold over India.

Every condition is present today to avert such a calamity and to register a victorious advance. The Nation awaits marching orders. It is prepared to enter the fray. Tripuri must give the order and all loyal Congressmen abide by it. That is the way to achieve unity, to heal the split.

¹ Ajay Ghosh was born in Mihijam in Bengal on 20 February 1909. He had his schooling in Kanpur where his father, a well-known physician, was settled. After passing his Matriculation examination, he joined the University of Allahabad. He joined the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) and was closely associated with Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad and other leaders of HSRA. He was arrested in 1929 and was tried along with Bhagat Singh and others in the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case. While Bhagat Singh and two others in the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case. While Bhagat Singh and two other co-accused in the Case were sentenced to death, Ajay Ghosh was released due to lack of evidence against him. In 1931, he began to take part in the trade Union Movement in Kanpur and was arrested. After his release in 1933, he joined the Communist Party of India, became its Politbureau member in 1938 and played a prominent role in promoting the cause of a *National Front* for the achievement of independence when the CPI in 1948 decided to start a movement for the revolutionary overthrow of the government, he was again imprisoned, 1948–49. After 1950, he played a leading role in giving a new orientation to the policy and programme of the CPI to function within the legal-constitutional framework. In 1951, he became the General Secretary of the CPI which position he held till his death on 11 January 1962.



29. Nehru on the Socialists

Congress Socialist, 12 March 1939.

12 March 1939

In one of the series of articles recently contributed by Jawaharlal to the *National Herald* the party has come in for some harsh criticism. The party has never resented criticism and would welcome any criticism from such an eminent and friendly source as Jawaharlalji. We feel, however, that Jawaharlalji's remarks are neither just nor merited. He blames the party for being doctrinaire, for talking tall and doing little else. In the four years of the existence of the Party, search as we may, there is not an instance of a doctrinaire attitude on any issue of importance. More often than not we find that Jawaharlalji's attitude was not very different from that of the party. Jawaharlalji knows that the party is mainly composed of tried Congressmen and the Party from its inception, in spite of virulent attacks, had observed a restraint which deserves commendation. Jawaharlalji charges us with personal attacks on the Congress leaders. We feel that this is a complete reversal of facts. As for the work done by the Party, not our bitterest opponents would charge us with having used our energies and influence in any direction but that of the greater glory of the Congress.

There might have been some exceptions, some irresponsible party members who mistook strong language and opposition for its own sake as the role of the Party, but the Party has neither encouraged nor countenanced any such tactics.

30. Organizational Crisis: Future at Stake

Article by P.C. Joshi, *National Front*, 12 March 1939.

12 March 1939

The Congress is in the throes of an organizational crisis of a character that has never been known before. The leadership refuses to lead. It has gone in for Satyagraha not against Imperialism but against the Rashtrapati himself. The leadership refuses to work with the President whom the majority of the delegates have elected.

It is a deep crisis within the supreme national leadership itself when the critical times we are passing through need a united leadership. It is a division between the majority of the leadership and a majority of the rank and file when the tasks facing us are so immense that they demand unity from top to bottom. Conflict is raging within our common front while the enemy has launched his offensive against us all and we had just begun discussing a pre-planned offensive of our own. Where is the basis inside the Congress as an organization for such a sad situation to arise? In others words, what are the organizational roots of the present crisis?

Development of the Congress

The pre-war Congress was sought to be modelled as a constitutional party on the European model but as we had no Parliament it became nothing more than a platform of the upper classes to ventilate their grievances and formulate their demands. The Congress was an annual gathering rather than an organization.

Gandhiji transformed it into a powerful organization by leading the first non-cooperation movement under its banner. The Congress retained its essentially middle class character even in composition but it headed a mass movement at the base. Another outcome was the creation of cadres devoted to the cause, working in and for the organization from day to day. The Congress

thus ceased being a platform and began to become an organization, relying on the masses, drawing its strength from them.

The last two Civil Disobedience campaigns (1930–34) were long-drawn out struggles. They steeled the Congress as an organization, and gave it more cadres and of a new type. Every Congress member was not an active participant in the struggle but its active sympathizer. Leading members of a locality organized the best of them as volunteers and they in their turn mobilized the masses and carried on the struggle. Below the leaders, came volunteers, the actual cadres who were in direct touch with the masses. The emergence of the Congress volunteer marks a new turning point in the evolution of the Congress as an organization. As yet the Congress cadres were Gandhian disciples, now the majority of the volunteers belonged to no sect but to the Congress as a whole, plain anti-imperialists who were wedded to no definite ideology but were directly linked with the masses, and were concerned with the movement as a whole.

As the organizer and leader of two nation-wide struggles Congress added to its stature, secured cadres and got a mass basis. When it got the chance to function legally it became rapidly transformed into a mass organization. The stupendous victory of the Congress at the elections even with a restricted franchise came as a surprise even to Congressmen. The elections showed the sympathy and confidence the Congress enjoyed. Nehru gave the signal for mass enrolment. The masses joined the Congress in millions. Congress membership which was 6 lacs in 1936 became 30 in 1937 and 40 in 1938.

Lack of Democratic Functioning

There was mass enrolment but no functioning of the organization. The organization continued to be run from above. Lower Committees and, especially the primary Committees, were hardly organized and rarely functioned. The AICC the Supreme national organ, does not meet more than once a year, the PCCs about twice a year, functioning DCCs not more than once in 2 months or so. Primary members rarely get a chance to meet.

Influx of mass membership coupled with lack of democratic functioning would constitute a contradiction within any organization. The last two years have seen a rising wave of mass movement which has brought to the surface this basic contradiction within the Congress and the present organizational crisis is the inevitable result.

If a mass organization is run from the top, the leadership fails to learn from the rank and file, a hiatus develops between the two. The leadership loses living contact with the rank and file and the latter loses confidence in the former. The organization as a whole fails to adequately reflect the needs of the movement. The leadership tends to become blind and the rank and file supremely critical.

Basis of Bureaucratization

When such is the normal state of affairs inside a mass political organization, as it is inside the Congress, and the leadership follows a passive policy of political drift while the mass movement is growing, it has necessarily to undertake a bureaucratization of the organization itself. This leads to inevitable conflicts within the organization.

Mass Organizations Outside

A characteristic feature of the recent mass movement is that it is growing outside the organizational framework of the Congress, initiated and led by workers, peasants, students and States people's organizations. The leadership opposed the collective affiliation of these mass organizations but that did not stop the rise of these organizations nor the growth of the movement. While with its

rising tide, more and more Congress workers joined up these movements, more and more Congress Committees actively helped them in their struggles. From the top the attempt was being made to isolate the biggest national organization from other mass organizations. At the base their common front was being forged. This further intensified the conflict not only within the Congress but between the Congress on the one hand and these sectional or class organizations on the other. A greater unity of the people was not forged but opposed.

The organizational issues facing the Congress, therefore, are nothing more nor less than the problems of organizing and functioning a democratic political organization of the Nation.

Split No Solution

The sharpness of the conflict is making various elements suggest different remedies.

Gandhiji has suggested a 'purification' of the Congress, he has sometimes even used the word 'purge'. He would give quit notice to all those who do not believe in Gandhism and if they do not obey, to ask his own followers to walk out. Either way it is splitting the Congress. The Congress does need purification, but that inside a political organization takes place during the course of struggle and through democratic functioning and cannot be brought about by insisting on non-political tasks like spinning the *Charkha*. A broad national movement cannot be accommodated inside any one ideology, Gandhiji's solution would reduce the Congress to becoming a narrow sect and cease being a mass organization.

Sjt M.N. Roy's solution is the exact antithesis of Gandhiji's. For him there is no way out unless the present leadership is overthrown and the Congress made into a revolutionary political party. To make the Congress into a 'revolutionary political party', change of leadership is necessary which would involve fighting a large, almost a majority section of the Congress. Gandhiji would impose his faith on the Congress, Roy his ideology. Both lead to the same result. One would knock out the top, the other would purge the rank and file, irrespective of the real needs of the movement.

The problem before us is not dividing and splitting the Congress. That is the easiest thing to do since Imperialism is itself working towards this very end, but the point is how to carry forward the whole Congress. If we cannot resolve differences within the national front except by splitting it, it ceases being national.

As against these suicidal courses, the organizational proposals we suggest are:

1. Democratic functioning of all organizations from the highest to the lowest.
2. Political education and technical training of cadres through Volunteer Corps, Training Camps, Summer Schools, etc.
3. Unity and solidarity with Trade Unions and Kisan Sabhas as a stepping stone to their collective affiliation, thus making the Congress the real and abiding United National Front of the entire Indian people.

This is the way to carry forward the heritage of national unity which the Congress embodies. Political drift leads inevitably to organizational split. To save the Congress from disruption we must defeat the policy of drift. To carry forward the policy of advance we must maintain all-round unity. Organizational policy ultimately emanates from the political line that is being pursued.

The coming of the Federation and the daily growing menace of war and the rapidly rising tempo of our own movement demand utmost unity within our Common National Front. Do we hate Imperialism more or love our mutual differences better? Without injury to the conscience of any single group or individual we have worked together as Congressmen. Nothing more is binding on us except the programme of the Congress itself. At Tripuri we are called upon to decide not our

ultimate ideological differences but the next forward step that we must take, all together against the main enemy of us all—British Imperialism.

31. CSP's Neutrality at Tripuri, 19 March 1939

Govt of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Roll No. 11, West Bengal State Archives.

19 March 1939

It is reported that there is a move by some left-wing leaders of Bengal to censure the CSP, on its attitude of neutrality adopted at Tripuri. The AICSP will be asked to convene a special session of the party at Sonapur in April next, to discuss the question and for the reorganization of its leadership. Gunada Mazumdar has informed Jai Prakash Narayan that due to the increasing pro-Subhas feeling in Bengal, unless the CSP gives an immediate assurance of their support to Subhas Bose on the Federation and Constituent Assembly questions it will be difficult for the party to carry out its programme in the face of united opposition from all political groups in Bengal. He further adds that the 'Left-wingers' in Bengal do not approve of the idea that the Socialist party should share the membership of the Working Committee with the 'right-wing' as they will then be under Mr Gandhi. It is assumed that Jawaharlal Nehru will be consulted before any reply is given to Gunada Mazumdar.

It is said that Subhas Bose will not presently resign the presidency of the Congress, though this may arise when the election of the new Working Committee takes place. An emergent meeting of Trade Unionists in Bengal may be held in Calcutta in the near future (at the Albert Hall) and it is expected that a 'United Front' may be formed if the CPI accepts *M.N. Roy's Group*. The 'Leftists', supported by Subhas Bose, will utilize the present position to free the Congress of the reactionaries, but they expect opposition from Bidhan Roy's and Kiran Sankar's groups, as well as from Nalini Ranjan Sircar, who is siding with Bidhan Roy.

32. On Tripuri

Article by Jayaprakash Narayan and P.C. Joshi, *National Front*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 19 March 1939.

19 March 1939

Unity between the Congress Socialists and Communists was an outstanding feature of the Tripuri Congress and it materially contributed to its achievements. Socialist-Communist co-operation sought to unite all those who thought that a policy of taking the next forward step was a practical necessity in the interests of the national movement, and that such a development alone afforded the basis of maintaining the unity of the entire Congress.

The resolution on National Demand is a step in the direction of political advance. The States people's resolution ends the policy of non-intervention and recognizes that their movement is a part of the larger struggle. The Congress itself has emerged united, and disruption which seemed imminent has been staved off.

Different Evaluation

Towards the end, this co-operation and accord appeared to break down. In the Subjects Committee, the entire Left voted together against Pantji's resolution of confidence in Gandhiji which implied a censure on Subhas Bose and expressed doubt that Bose may form a Working Committee which may not enjoy Gandhiji's confidence. But this unity of action was not there when the same resolution

came up for vote in the open session on the 10th where it was evaluated differently by the two of us. The result was that while the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) remained neutral on the resolution when it came up for voting before the open session, the Communists voted against it and made speeches in defence of certain amendments.

Common Purpose

This difference in action between the Socialists and the Communists is being misused by certain interested parties to destroy their growing co-operation and to discredit and weaken the CSP itself. Resignations being instigated under the slogan that the CSP has capitulated to the Right and betrayed Bose. Similarly charges of vacillation are also made against the Communists. We want to repudiate these allegations on behalf of our respective leaderships. The attempt which was made by certain uncontrollable elements to disturb the open session on the 10th and the unfortunate stand which Sjt Sarat Bose took in opposing the resolution on the National Demand created a difficult situation. It became urgently necessary both for the CSP and the Communists as serious revolutionaries to dissociate themselves from these disruptive and opportunistic moves. This had to be done without giving up the stand against Pantji's resolution which was no doubt directed against Subhas Bose and therefore against achieving a united leadership.

CSP Argument

The CSP sought to combine the two tasks by remaining neutral on the resolution, but at the same time making its stand clear in a statement made by one of us. The Congress Socialists thought that, after the events of the 10th, a vote against Pantji's resolution would be construed as support to a Left disruptionist tendency and would harm the unity of the Congress itself.

Communist Argument

The Communists who voted against the resolution equally emphatically disassociated themselves from the rowdiness and from Sjt Sarat Bose's stand against the National Demand, but felt that a vote against the resolution was essential to prevent the break-up of the Left whose unity alone could win the whole-hearted co-operation of the old veterans, as also prevent the isolation of Left nationalists from Socialists as a whole, who together constitute the LEFT.

Unite Again

It is not our purpose to sit in judgment over the above two evaluations and the different lines of action taken. We appeal, instead, to all Socialists and Communists to close up their ranks to face the immense tasks that have arisen. Socialist unity was responsible for the advance registered in the Tripuri resolutions. Socialist unity is equally necessary to carry them to the mass of Congressmen through a widespread campaign.

Inside every Congress Committee we must report on the resolution on National Demand and through it popularize it on a mass scale. In every town and village we must hold meetings and tell the people that Congress has given the call for nation-wide struggle against Imperialism and declare that the time to assert the will of the nation through a Constituent Assembly has come. Not compromise with Imperialism but struggle against it is the mandate of Tripuri. Congress has commanded all Congressmen, every organization, Congress Ministries and the entire Congress people to work for this single aim and overcome the forces of disunity.

We must make the most effective use of the resolution on States which pledges support to the States' people in their fight for Responsible Government and Civil Liberties. Such struggles are being fought in over increasing number in some State or the other. Through our Congress

Committees, we must work for active aid and effective guidance to the movement in our neighbouring State, and press for the co-ordination and centralization of all these local struggles as constituting actual preparation for the national attack against Imperialist rule.

To fulfil the above tasks, it is necessary that the Socialists and Communists work as one team. To re-establish such unity, it is necessary that Socialists and Communists, must together put all their pressure against any attempt to malign or disrupt the Congress Socialist Party. A strong, united, disciplined CSP would most easily achieve Socialist unity and successfully face the great tasks that await us all after Tripuri.

Joint work to implement the Tripuri resolutions and to develop the agitational campaign against the Federation and a campaign of fraternization with the States people's struggles would completely re-establish and cement socialist unity. What we together were able to achieve at Tripuri should inspire us to come together never to part again.

33. Communists at Tripuri

Article by A.K. Ghosh, *National Front*, 19 March 1939.

19 March 1939

In the crisis that developed after the Presidential Election, the slogan given by the Communists was: 'Maintain the unity of the Congress and move forward.' The crisis was evaluated by them as the outcome of the policy of drift which had sharpened the conflict between the Right and the Left. This crisis could be resolved by a united Congress moving forward under a united leadership. The slogan of 'homogeneous cabinet' was rejected by the Communists as disruptive—no matter whether it came from the Right or the Left.

How far did we succeed in implementing the line? Has not Tripuri meant the smashing up of the entire Left including the Communists? Did not the Communists follow a tailist policy throughout the Session? Were they not obsessed with ideas of unity and did they not, therefore, try to placate everybody and ended by placating none? Did they not in their eagerness for unity vacillate at every step, renounce their entire political line and even their fundamental principles? These are the questions that are being asked.

The most important issue before Tripuri was restoration of unity in the ranks of the Congress. As yet the split was confined only to the top but it was obvious to all that unless speedy steps were taken to heal the split, confusion and demoralization would set in within the whole organization.

Both the Socialists and Communists realized that unless the dust raised by the controversy over the Presidential election was cleared, it would not be possible to conduct the proceedings of the Congress in a calm atmosphere and focus attention on political issues.

They wanted President Bose himself to take the initiative for issuing a statement removing all misunderstanding and expressing his confidence *in* the political integrity of the members of the Working Committee.

This attempt failed and the resolution of confidence in Gandhiji was brought forward by the Right Wing.

Left Opposition to the Confidence Resolution

The Communists realized the political importance of the resolution. It sought to restore unity on the basis of the status quo both politically and organizationally. It was conceived in a spirit of distrust of the Left and was an attempt to squeeze it out and render the President helpless. It had to be amended in order to remove its disruptive features. The Socialists, Communists and the Left

as a whole rallied behind these amendments. Such complete unity of the Left had never been witnessed in the Congress before. The very fact that the amendments secured the support of nearly 130 members of the All India Congress Committee and ultimately the resolution was passed in the Subjects Committee by 218 votes against 135 shows the agreement that had been achieved among the Left.

Achievements of the united Left

But the Left had to be united not merely for preventing disruption from the Right but also and primarily for evolving a policy of advance which could be accepted by the Congress as a whole. Months before the Session, the Communists had formulated such a policy, and had popularized it through their organs. Since Haripura, the national forces had become immensely strong. The States people's movement had assumed gigantic proportions. Workers and peasants movements had grown enormously. On the other hand, the world situation had grown more critical. The need of the hour was to unite the entire national forces and move forward for an offensive against the proposed Federation, against the entire slave Constitution, against Imperialist domination.

The Communists succeeded in achieving unity with the Socialists for this policy which was embodied in an agreed draft resolution. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had before him that draft when he prepared the resolution on the National Demand which was ultimately passed by the Congress. The resolution falls far short of the draft prepared by Socialists and Communists jointly as far as the operative part is concerned, but it does constitute a definite advance as our Editorial points out.

For the first time, therefore, the Communists succeeded in giving their impress on the main political resolution of the Congress and in substantially influencing decisions of the Congress as a whole.

This big advance was rendered possible by the complete unity that was achieved between Socialists and Communists. For the major part of the Session, they worked in co-operation and as one team.

A New Role

The big swing towards the Left during the last Congress Elections, the enormously increased strength of the Left delegation at Tripuri placed on the shoulders of the Communists and Socialists a heavy responsibility. Hitherto the Left had acted merely as an oppositional section in the Congress. Their role in the Congress had been merely that of popularizing Left policy. Now because of their very increase of strength, they had also to play the role of unifiers of the Congress, they had to evolve slogans which could be accepted by the Congress as a whole.

The Communists on the whole succeeded beyond general expectation in fulfilling their new role. They demonstrated beyond all doubt their loyalty to the Congress, their earnest desire for unity.

Propaganda Squads

The work done by squads of Communists in the delegates camp for popularizing the line of unity and struggle was better than at any other session. Events moved rapidly at Tripuri. The situation changed every few hours. These squads kept the delegates acquainted with the shifts in the position and the tactics to be followed. The major slogans of the Session as a whole as given in the special Tripuri number of *National Front* found wide support. No less than 1800 copies of the *National Front* were sold at the session by Communist squads.

Our Failure on the Platform

The most serious failing of the Communists was, however, on the platform—in both the Subjects Committee and the open session. It is because of this failure that the prestige of the Communists did not rise as high as their work warranted.

It would be no exaggeration to say that not one of our comrades succeeded in putting forward the Communist line of unity and struggle in its entirety. The crisis in the Congress, the most burning issue before the Session, was not properly evaluated. There was a tendency to pose the question of unity in the abstract and fail to make a proper political criticism of the confidence resolution, while on the other hand, some comrades delivered speeches which constitute nothing but Left attacks on the Right. Comrades Bankim Mukherjee and Dutt Mazumdar forgot our basic slogans of unity, failed to take stock of the situation and made speeches attributing motives to the Right wing leadership. Their speeches both in content and approach were sectarian and failed to strike the note of unity.

Because of this failure to evaluate the crisis on the one hand and to strike a note of unity on the other, we failed to explain why we did not oppose the expression of confidence in Gandhiji's leadership. No wonder, the declaration by Communists that they had confidence in Gandhiji's leadership was interpreted by a section of the delegates as the repudiation of the line we had hitherto advocated.

A Serious Mistake

On the National Demand resolution, the most important political resolution of the Session, our comrades of the AICC made a most serious mistake when they permitted the withdrawal of the amendment which the Socialists and Communists had jointly agreed upon. Even after the acceptance of a part of the amendment by Jawaharlal the resolution remained general and vague as it did not incorporate any concrete plan of action. The Communists failed to bring their line of unity and struggle before the mass of delegates in the open session and explain how the adoption of such a line would itself go a long way in solving the crisis and establishing real unity. Nor could any Communist speak on the States' resolution and explain the need for not merely intervening in individual States but for the Congress to guide and lead the States people's struggle as a part of our national movement itself.

This serious failure on the platform by our Congress delegation in general, and of our AICC membership in particular, has given rise to tremendous confusion in the ranks of our supporters, and has definitely harmed the prestige of Communists. Tripuri gave us a great opportunity to come out before the masses of Congressmen as an effective political group, fighting for the maintenance of unity and for the policy of advance. This opportunity was missed.

Tripuri has once again brought out the urgent need for Socialist unity. The fact that unity of Socialists and Communists had enabled the Left to make such an impress on the decisions of the entire Congress, to mobilize such large support for their amendment to the Confidence resolution, and the fact that directly the Socialists and Communists failed to act together the Right wing scored an easy victory, must themselves convince all that without achieving unity amongst themselves the Socialist forces would be unable to check the drift and to take the entire Congress forward on the path of struggle. This is the most important lesson of Tripuri. The correctness of the line of Socialist unity followed by Communists hitherto has been vindicated. That line has to be pursued with still greater vigour, leading to the formation of a single United Socialist Party.



34. Tripuri Resolutions—Our National Demand

Congress Socialist, 19 March 1939.

19 March 1939

‘The Congress has for more than half a century striven for the advancement of the people of India and has represented the urge of the Indian people towards freedom and self-expression. During the past 20 years, it has engaged itself, on behalf of the masses of the country, in a struggle against British Imperialism and, through the suffering and disciplined sacrifice of the people, it has carried the nation a long way to the independence that is its objective.

‘With the growing strength of the people, it has adapted itself to the changing and developing situation, and while pursuing various programmes it has ever worked for the independence of India and the establishment of a democratic state in the country. Rejecting the Government of India Act, and with full determination to end it, it has decided to take advantage of the measure of provincial autonomy that this Act provided—restricted and circumscribed as it was—in order to strengthen the national movement and to give such relief to the masses as was possible under the circumstances. To the Federal part of the Act, the Congress declared its uncompromising opposition and its determination to resist its imposition.

‘The Congress declares afresh its solemn resolve to achieve independence for the nation and to have a constitution framed for a free India through a constituent assembly elected by the people and without any interference by a foreign authority. No other constitution or attempted solution of the problem can be accepted by the Indian people.

‘The Congress is of the opinion that in view of the situation in India, the organized strength of the national movement, the remarkable growth of the consciousness of the masses, a new awakening among the people of Indian States, as well as the rapid development of the world situation, the time has come for the full application of the principle of self-determination to India so that the people of India might establish an independent democratic state by means of a constituent assembly.

‘Not only the inherent right and the dignity of the people demand this full freedom, but also economic and other problems which press insistently on the masses cannot find solution: nor can India get rid of her poverty and keep pace with modern progress unless the people have full opportunities of self-development and growth which independence alone can give.

‘Provincial autonomy accords no such scope for development and its capacity for good is being rapidly exhausted. The proposed Federation strangles India still further and will not be accepted. The Congress therefore is firmly of the opinion that the whole of the Government of India Act must give place to a constitution for a free India made by the people themselves.

‘An independent and democratic India will face the solution of our great problems rapidly and effectively and will align herself with the progressive peoples of the world and thus aid the cause of democracy and freedom.

‘With a view to speed the realization of the Congress objective and in order to face effectively the national and international crises that loom ahead and to prepare the country for a nation-wide struggle, this Congress calls upon all parts of the Congress organization, Congress Provincial Governments and the people generally to work to this end by promoting unity and seeking to eliminate the disruptive forces and conditions which lead to communal conflicts and national disunity, by coordinating the activities of the Provincial Governments with work outside the legislature, and by strengthening the organization, so as to make it a still more effective organ of the people’s will.’

Awakening in the States

'The Congress welcome the awakening of the people of Indian States in many parts of the country and considers this as a hopeful prelude to a larger freedom, comprising the whole of India, for which the Congress has laboured. The Congress supports the demand for responsible government and civil liberty in the States and expresses its solidarity with these movements for freedom and self-expression, which are integral parts of the larger struggle. While appreciating that some rulers of States have recognized this awakening as a healthy sign of growth and are seeking to adjust themselves to it in co-operation with their people, the Congress regrets that some other rulers have sought to suppress these movements by banning peaceful and legitimate organizations and all political activity and, in cases, resorting to cruel and inhuman repression.

'The whole of India was profoundly stirred by the announcement of the indefinite fast by Gandhiji in order to remedy the breach by the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot of the settlement arrived at between him and his counsellors on the one hand and Mr Patel as representing the people on the other.

'The Congress expresses its gratification at the recent agreement resulting in the termination of the fast and trusts that the people of Rajkot will have their aspirations fulfilled, and further hopes that the Princes of Kathiawar and other parts of India will march with the times, and in co-operation with their people, introduce popular Government.

'The Congress is of the opinion that the resolution of the Haripura session of the Congress relating to States has answered the expectations raised by it and has justified itself by encouraging the peoples of States to organize themselves and conduct their own movements for freedom. The Haripura policy was conceived in the best interests of the people in order to enable them to develop self-reliance and strength. This policy was dictated by circumstances and by a recognition of the limitations inherent in the circumstances, but it was never conceived as an obligation.

'The Congress has always possessed the right, as it is its duty, to guide the people of the States and lead them with its influence. The great awakening that is taking place among the people of the States may lead to a relaxation or to the complete removal of the restraint which the Congress imposed upon itself, thus resulting in an ever-increasing identification of the Congress with the States people.

'The Congress desires to reiterate that its objective, complete independence, is for the whole of India, inclusive of the States, which are integral parts of India which cannot be separated, and which must have the same measure of political, social and economic freedom as the rest of India'.

Removal of Corruption

'Inasmuch as experience has shown that the working of the Congress machinery is often rendered difficult by abuses in the method of enrolment of members, elections and otherwise, and it is urgently necessary to remove all such defects, the Congress authorizes the AICC to take all steps that may be necessary to attain that end, including changes in the constitution. The AICC shall have the authority to give immediate effect to such constitutional changes. The Congress directs the Working Committee to take all necessary steps to investigate and rectify the existing membership rolls and to take all further action with a view to strengthening the organization and making it conform to the Congress constitution.

Foreign Policy

'The Congress records its entire disapproval of British foreign policy culminating in the Munich Pact, the Anglo-Italian Agreement and the recognition of Rebel Spain. This policy has been one of deliberate betrayal of democracy, repeated breach of pledges, the ending of the system of

collective security, and co-operation with Governments which are avowed enemies of democracy and freedom. As the result of this policy, the world is being reduced to a state of international anarchy where brutal violence triumphs and flourishes unchecked and decides the fate of nations, and in the name of peace stupendous preparations are being made for the most terrible of wars.

‘International morality has sunk so low in central and south-western Europe that the world has witnessed with horror organized terrorism of the Nazi Government, against the people of the Jewish race and the continuous bombing from the air by the rebel forces of cities and civilian inhabitants and helpless refugees.

‘The Congress disassociates itself entirely from British foreign policy which has consistently aided Fascist Powers and helped in the destruction of democratic countries. The Congress is opposed to Imperialism and Fascism alike and is convinced that world peace and progress require the ending of both these. In the opinion of the Congress, it is urgently necessary for India to direct her own foreign policy as an independent nation, thereby keeping aloof from both Imperialism and Fascism, and pursuing her path of peace and freedom.

Presidential Election Crisis

‘In view of the misunderstandings that have arisen in the Congress and the country on account of the controversy in connection with the presidential election and after, it is desirable that the Congress should clarify the position and declare its general policy.

‘The Congress declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies which have governed its programme in the past years under the guidance of Mahatmaji, and is definitely of opinion that there should be no break in these policies, and that they should continue to govern the Congress programme in future. The Congress expresses its confidence in the work of the working committee which functioned during the last year and regrets that any aspersions should have been cast against any of its members.

‘In view of a new critical situation which may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatmaji alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such crisis, the Congress records it as imperative that its executive should command his implicit confidence and the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi.’

35. Tripuri—A Political Evaluation

Editorial, *National Front*, 19 March 1939.

19 March 1939

The Tripuri Session of the Indian National Congress had two major issues before it. On the one hand the developments in the international as well as national sphere had created a situation which demanded that the National Congress decide to launch a country-wide offensive against imperialism and proceed forthwith to prepare for the same; on the other hand, the Congress was faced with an organizational crisis of first rate importance, which had to be solved before any advance could be made.

The two issues were closely inter-related. Sjt Subhas Bose had contested and won the presidential election under unprecedented conditions. He had stood for the election against the wishes of Gandhiji and the entire Working Committee. He had placed before the country a programme of launching a nationwide attack against Imperialism and was backed by the Socialists, Communists and the entire Left.

Gandhiji had interpreted this victory as his own defeat and defeat for his principles. Almost the entire Working Committee had resigned. Even Jawaharlal Nehru had expressed his inability to co-operate with Sjt Bose.

Rajendra Babu's Hint

The Working Committee had Ceased to exist. Gandhiji as well as the resigning members of the Working Committee had stated that they would give Mr Bose a free hand to work out his policy and form a 'homogeneous' Working Committee. Did it mean that the Right-Wing leaders were going to take a passive and benevolent attitude towards the proposals of launching an immediate offensive which was sure to be posed before the session by the president and the Left who supported him? Not in the least. This was clear from the statement of Babu Rajendra Prasad issued on the 1st of March.

Side-Tracking

The Socialists and Communists had posed the issues very realistically. They had already realised that in the controversy which raged round Bose's election and the subsequent resignations the main political issue of taking a decision on the proposals for an immediate offensive against Imperialism was being side-tracked. The statements made by Bose in connection with the Federation were taken by the Working Committee members as 'aspersions' on their political bonafides. The rallying of the Left round Bose on the plank of a plan of struggle was viewed by the Right with alarm and as an effort to challenge their leadership and as a move to form a Leftist Working Committee. The controversy was sought to be shifted to a personal and moral plane and away from the political plane. The Left, especially the Communists, on the other hand insisted that the main issue before the session was political—was one of deciding upon the expediency of launching a struggle. They realized that if a decision for struggle was to be taken by the Congress and implemented by the people, it had to be accompanied by the solution of the crisis in the leadership. 'A united leadership representing the present relation of forces in the National Front, and a joint plan of action and preparation for struggle,' these were their slogans.

Right up to the eve of the session of the Subjects Committee on the 8th March, the Socialists and Communists were jointly occupied with the task of achieving unity among the entire Left on the basis of a draft omnibus resolution incorporating the proposals for struggle. In accordance with their plans they had almost succeeded in producing a draft which united the Socialists, Communists and Bose himself with his Left Nationalist following. Efforts were also being made to further modify the draft with the collaboration of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru so that it could afford a reasonable basis for the unity of the entire leadership. In order to prevent the side-tracking of the main issue, they were also attempting to persuade Sjt Bose to make a statement which would clear the air and set at rest suspicions raised round the alleged aspersions and round the move to form a Leftist Working Committee.

Pant's Resolution

But the Right wing leaders viewed with alarm the election of a nominee of the Left as President. The subsequent consolidation of the Left round the President for a line of advance was interpreted by them as a move to challenge their leadership, as a sudden break with the policy which the Working Committee was following. That is why they sprung a surprise at Tripuri by bringing before the AICC a resolution which demanded a straight vote of confidence in the Working Committee and their work, in the fundamental policies of Gandhiji and in Gandhiji himself as the leader. This resolution further administered a mild rebuke to Sjt Bose for the aspersions and

‘requested him to appoint the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji.’ The main purpose of the resolution was to restore the prestige which the Right had lost by the election of Sjt Bose against their own wishes and on a programme which they disagreed with. This they dared not to do by asking for a straight non-confidence vote against Bose. They could not do it by asking for a straight vote on the plan of action. That is why they asked for a vote of confidence in Gandhiji and on his fundamental principles.

A Vote on Gandhiji

The Left true to the line they had evolved for Tripuri, refused to be drawn into the trap of making such a resolution the focus of the entire session. They attempted to get such modification in the resolution which would make it acceptable to both Bose and the Right-wing leaders. They attempted to seek a formula which would be acceptable to both of them and thus end the squabble which was pushing the political work of the session into the background. But the Right-wing leaders refused to change a comma of the resolution. After a prolonged debate in the Subjects Committee all the amendments were defeated and the resolution passed. 40% of the membership of the Subjects Committee voting against it this was a significant victory when one considers that the resolution had put the exclusive leadership of Gandhiji to vote.

There is another aspect to this resolution. Through this resolution the Right-wing leaders seized the initiative for restoring unity. But it was a different unity from the one which the Left were working for. The unity which they wanted was the unity of the existing leadership, unity for the status quo. Pantji persistently struck this note of unity in his speech. He wanted Sjt Bose to remain as President. He wanted the resolution to enable the old Working Committee to come back and to co-operate with Sjt Bose. The failure of the President to take the initiative in making a clear statement that his main purpose was a political advance in cooperation, and not in opposition to the old leadership, gave the Right a chance to come forward as the unifiers. They seized the initiative and exploited it fully to restore the lost prestige and re-establish the status quo which had been so rudely shaken by the result of the election.

Cause of the Landslide

The Right victory in the Subjects Committee, and their obstinacy to concede even the moderate changes demanded by the Left, set the stage for a battle royal in the open session. Feelings ran high in the delegates camp on the night preceding the open session.

The side-tracking was complete. The tension assumed a factional character. A leaflet was distributed in the delegates’ camp insinuating that Sjt Sarat Bose was instigating a smash up in the open session. The session opened in a tense atmosphere which was rendered still more tense by the news of a serious turn in the President’s illness. Three thousand delegates and 60 thousand visitors waited in suspense. Would they bring forward the much contested resolution in this atmosphere? There was vacillation upon the dais. Mr Nariman’s motion to adjourn the issue till the President was able to be present was ruled out. Mr Aney’s motion to refer the resolution back to the AICC was put to vote and declared carried on a show of hands. This was the signal for calls for a division and a protest from the Bengal, UP and the Punjab blocks. A small minority of Left, uncontrollable seized by provincial and factional passions, staged an unseemly demonstration and played straight into the hands of the Right and prepared the ground for a disastrous landslide in voting which was postponed for the next day.

An Opportunist Speech

This demonstration of the Left uncontrollables was followed by an unfortunate speech by Sjt Sarat Bose on the resolution on the National Demand. This resolution was drafted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the basis of the joint draft submitted by the Socialist and Communist delegates. In the Subjects Committee the Socialists and Communists had moved a joint amendment through which they tried to incorporate into the resolution two basic formulations: (1) that the time had arrived to launch nation-wide attack against Imperialism and (2) that a plan of action was necessary to prepare for the same. The mover then made certain changes in the resolution which though they fell far short of the amendment yet represented an advance which could be a sufficient basis for further work. The amendment was, therefore, withdrawn and the resolution passed unanimously in the Subjects Committee. It was this resolution which Sarat Babu suddenly attacked and opposed in the open session immediately after the demonstration. He called it 'words, words, words' and said it was hypocritical.

Left Unity Shaken

The rowdy demonstration and Sarat Babu's pseudo-radical opportunist stand shook up the unity which the Left had patiently built up during the past 4 days at Tripuri. A section of the Left would have liked to justify the demonstration and proceed to a frontal attack on the Right. Another section was so much in panic that it would have liked to suspend all opposition to Pant's Resolution. The Communists and Socialists who together form the core of the Left, however, kept their heads cool. They dissociated themselves from the demonstration and decided to express their protest against Pantji's resolution. But this opposition was expressed in different ways. The CSP delegates made a speech condemning the demonstration, rejecting Pantji's resolution to which they refused to move any amendments and remained neutral. The Communists on the other hand made a similar statement about the demonstration but moved their amendments and voted against the resolution. The stand taken by the Communists was more correct. While it was necessary to demarcate from the Left uncontrollables it was impossible to remain neutral, because it would have meant a complete isolation from the non-Socialist elements who formed part of the united Left. In fact if the Communists had taken a quick decision and given a lead to the CSP they might have succeeded in getting the entire Left to vote against the resolution, and thus prevent the disruption which has followed in the wake of this difference.

Left Out-manoeuvred

The passing of Pantji's resolution in the next day's open session by an overwhelming majority brought the session to a virtual conclusion. The exodus of the delegates who had been whipped to Tripuri to swell the Rightist vote began. The remaining session was lifeless. One of the results of the Tripuri session is that it has been an organizational set back for the Left. The Left entered the session with greatly augmented forces. They had forged a unity as never before. Their nominee was elected President in an open contest. Their dominating slogan was united leadership for a joint step forward. But this was not accepted by the entire Left forces. Some sections of it, especially the Left Nationalists thought more in terms of an exclusive Left leadership and less in those of moving the Congress as a whole to the next forward stage in the struggle for freedom. It was due to this weakness that the Right was able to out-manoeuvre them.

Political Advance

Tripuri has however registered a certain degree of political advance. On the eve of Tripuri the Left was rallying the people behind two slogans: (1) We cannot wait till Federation is imposed upon us,

we must hit out now, when imperialism is in international difficulties and the people's struggle is growing from strength to strength. (2) We demand united leadership and a united Congress to lead us into the battle. The 'National Demand' resolution, in spite of its failings, for the first time speaks of a 'nation-wide struggle' not in the context of Federation but in that of 'the organized strength of the National movement, etc.' and of the 'rapid development of the world situation'. It gives a call to the people, to Congress organizations and to Congress Governments to prepare for the same. The clearly enunciated plan of action put forward by the Communists has not been accepted. It is only through such a plan that the imminence of the struggle could be sharply brought out, and the conscious effort be made to raise the tempo of the existing struggles. However, the advance already registered can very well become a lever in the hands of the Socialists and Communists and all earnest Congressmen to quicken the pace of developments and make the struggle inevitable in the immediate future. The resolution on the States people's struggle does not go beyond the scope of the present developments. It recognizes that non-interference is not an obligation, but this is already recognized in practice. The policy of consciously coordinating and guiding the States people's struggle as an integral part of the general National struggle is not recognized.

The main results of Tripuri Session may be summed up thus:

1. The Right has succeeded in re-establishing the status quo in leadership which had been upset by the results of the presidential election. But the inherent weakness of the Right victory is that it was won on a false issue, and not the issue of struggle but on that of Gandhiji's leadership.
2. It has registered an organizational setback for the Left. Confusion created by the Communists and Socialists voting differently on Pant's resolution in the open session is being exploited to discredit and divide Socialists and Communists. There is a further danger of the non-Socialist followers of Bose being estranged from the Socialists. (Rumour about the formation of a radical Party.)
3. Because of the successful effort to build Left unity on the basis of a resolution giving a plan of action, a definite political advance was secured in the earlier part of the session which is registered in the resolution on the National Demand.
4. The set back to the Left is temporary and the victory of Right a pyrrhic one. In the measure the Socialists and Communists unite themselves, come forward to implement in practice the political decisions of Tripuri, in that measure they would be able to repair the organizational damage done and to carry the Congress as a whole forward to the next stage of struggle.

36. Legalize CPI

Congress Socialist, 19 March 1939.

19 March 1939

Jayaprakash Narayan, General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party and P.C. Joshi, Editor, *National Front* have issued the following statement:

'The 20th March last year saw nation-wide demonstrations demanding the legalization of the Communist Party of India and calling upon the Congress Ministries to raise the matter with the Central Government which imposed the ban and themselves declare legal the provincial organizations of the Party. We call upon our countrymen to once more celebrate the day. Every citizen must support the demand, for it is a vital matter of Civil Liberties—the right of organization. Every Congressman must be in the forefront of the agitation, for a legal Communist Party would

be an asset to the anti-imperialist movement. The Communist Party brings to our national movement the rich heritage of the world revolutionary movement.

Ten years ago, on 20th March, there took place countrywide arrests for the Meerut Conspiracy Case, to create the legal basis for declaring the Communist Party illegal. This year, as in the last, we must make this day the occasion to demand its legality. Every democratic organization, Congress Committee, Kisan Sabha, Trade Union, Students' Federation, etc., must be drawn in. Every Indian who cares for freedom of opinion and association must be appealed for support'.

37. Bihar Socialist Party and the Pant Resolution

Searchlight, 21 March 1939.

Patna
20 March 1939

[A meeting of the Council of Action of the Bihar Socialist Party was held at Patna. Faridul Haque Ansari presided. The main item on the agenda was consideration of the steps taken by the National Executive of the Socialist Party at Tripuri with regard to Pandit Pant's resolution.]

'This meeting of the Council of Action has carefully considered the statement of Comrade Jayaprakash Narayan explaining the implications of Pandit Pant's resolution and is satisfied that the decision of the Party to remain neutral at the plenary session of the Congress was a correct one, particularly in view of the need of maintaining unity on the eve of a national struggle and because the attitude of neutrality does not commit the Party to the acceptance of any ideological implications that may be read into the resolution; but the Council regrets that such an important decision should have been taken by the National Executive without consulting the Party delegates on such an important issue and suggests that in future utmost efforts should be made to establish contact with the Party delegates and seek their guidance in all important matters of policy and programme on such occasions. This Council also recommends to the National Executive to convene a conference of the party as early as possible to review the situation arising out of the Tripuri resolutions.

'This Council welcomes the resolution on National Demand by the Indian National Congress because it marks an end of the policy of political drift and is a call for a more forward policy. The resolution urges upon the nation to prepare for a nation-wide struggle, as in the opinion of the Congress the time has come for the immediate application of the principle of self-determination to India. The Congress has also declared that the possibilities of any further good from parliamentary activities have been practically exhausted. The Council, therefore, calls upon the members of the party to take necessary steps for giving effect to the resolution and to help in the preparation for a decisive attack on British Imperialism.'

38. League of Radical Congressmen

M.N. Roy's statement, M.N. Roy Papers, Microfilm (9), File No. LRC/3/13, NMML.

20 March 1939

The debacle of the left wing at Tripuri has given a new impetus to radical Congressmen for organizing themselves more effectively, on a more realistic platform. In spite of the surprising attitude of the Congress Socialist Party, several hundred delegates voted against Govind Ballabh Pant's resolution in the open session. Those delegates mostly are not associated with any party within the Congress. Yet they represent the radical sentiments of the rank and file membership of the Congress. After

the Congress session, many of them, including about forty members of the All India Congress Committee, had several informal meetings with the object of considering the situation created by the events at Tripuri, and to decide the plan of action of radical Congressmen in that situation. The consensus of opinion was that, while categorically rejecting the tendency of forming parties inside the Congress, those opposed to the present policy and the Gandhian leadership of the Congress must conduct their activities in a coordinated manner. The suggestion for the formation of a League of Radical Congressmen was generally welcomed as a step in that direction. The prevailing opinion was not to set up any adhoc organization. But the necessity of some sort of a coordinating machinery was felt. The result of the deliberation will be set forth in a Manifesto to be issued shortly. The Manifesto will lay down the guiding principles of a non-party left wing inside the Congress formulate a concrete plan of action for radical Congressmen. All subscribing to the Manifesto will be eligible for the membership of the League which will work for the purpose of combating tendencies which may interfere with an uncompromising struggle for the enforcement of the political programme of the Congress. I have the satisfaction of announcing that this plan of a broad-based, non-party left wing of the Congress has secured the approbation of prominent radicals throughout the country, and therefore is sure to guarantee against the repetition of what happened at Tripuri.

39. Neutrality—The Best Course

Article by Jayaprakash Narayan, *Congress Socialist*, 26 March 1939; *Searchlight*, 17 March 1939, for the Full Text of JP's Statement.

26 March 1939

The question why the Congress Socialist Party remained neutral when Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant's resolution was voted upon in the private session of the delegates is exercising the minds of many people and a variety of mis-understandings seems to be current. It has been suggested in some quarters, to which such thoughts have never been foreign, that the leaders of the Socialist Party merely wanted to play the good boy in order to please powers that be. To such quarters I find it needless to reply.

Pros and Cons

To the question why we remained neutral I have a brief answer to make. We did not oppose the resolution because we did not want to be a party to driving Mahatma Gandhi and his followers out of the Congress, for, that and nothing short of it would have been the consequence if that resolution had been defeated. What that would have meant to the cause of the country I need hardly point out. Particularly would such a consequence have been disastrous at the present juncture when a crisis is impending and we are thinking in terms of a nation wide struggle. The need and importance of unity in our rank in such circumstances become far greater. We did, incidentally I should add here that it is a matter for rejoicing that Panditji's resolution unacceptable as it was to us on certain grounds, at least gave the go by to the theories of incompatibility and homogeneity which we had so strongly criticized and which had threatened at one time to bring disunity in the ranks of the Congress. We, further, did not oppose the resolution because it was made clear that it did not imply, in any manner, a vote of censure on the President. Lastly, we did not oppose it because we firmly believed, after considering the various forces that were at work and that had manifested themselves in various undesirable forms, that it was in the interest of the Congress and the national movement as a whole that the Working Committee should command Gandhiji's implicit confidence and be appointed in accordance with his wishes.

On the other hand, we did not support the resolution because we were unable to accept all its ideological implications. For instance, we were not prepared to admit that Gandhiji 'alone' could lead the country to victory in the event of a crisis.

The above considerations taken together left no option to us but to adopt an attitude of neutrality. Only those who are labouring under a misapprehension or who are acting upon hostile motives can lay the charge against us that we sold socialism to Gandhism. This charge might have had some justification if we had supported the resolution. But it can have no basis at all when we made it clear in an authoritative statement that we had ideological differences with the resolution and that it was due to them that we were unable to support it. The action we took was prompted entirely by considerations of unity and I am firmly of the opinion that it was the best course to follow in the national interest. Any other decision would have been factional and sectarian. The issue involved was not whether the Congress should accept Gandhism or Socialism, but whether it should be split up or hold together giving scope to all sections in it to work, subject to the acceptance of the fundamental policies of the Congress with which there was to be no break. Such a break has never been contemplated by us nor have we ever demanded it. Our final verdict was clear.

Rolling Along Enmeshed

A question may be asked, why, if such were our views did we oppose the same resolution in the Subjects Committee. This is straightforward answer. In view of the considerations given above we should have remained neutral in the Subjects Committee also. But we did not. Why? Because till then we were rolling along enmeshed in the logic of our action in supporting Subhas Babu at the elections and were functioning in a bloc with others of his supporters. Much as we disliked to divide the Congress into two rival groups which were intent upon measuring their strength on unreal issues, we were caught up in the stream and were running with it. There was also irritation in our minds at the leaders' refusal to agree to make any change in the resolution. So considering the pros and cons and striking off the balance we had decided to oppose the resolution. After the Subjects Committee, however, certain things happened, which forced upon us the conclusion that in the circumstances it would be ruinous if we took the responsibility of defeating the resolution, for certain elements were at work in the Congress which were working for chaos in the name of 'leftism' and these would have been strengthened if we yet opposed the resolution. We felt more strongly the need for unity and the necessity of Gandhiji in playing his due and unique role in the Congress. This decision was strengthened by Sarat Babu's opposition to my resolution on National Demand, exposing lack of a serious political purpose in one of the top-most leaders of the so-called left-wing, and later on by his denial that the draft of a certain resolution had been agreed upon between him and us.

Due to the shortness of time and our faulty organization at Tripuri, for which I take the entire blame, it was not possible for us to consult our delegates and this led to a certain amount of confusion in our ranks. Outside too misgivings and discontent seem to be prevalent, part of them due to faulty press reports. For instance, it has been generally believed that the Party moved only one amendment and that that was mine. There were, however, three party or rather joint amendments—one moved by Shri Achyut Patwardhan¹, another by me and the third by Shri Bharadwaj. I feel that these misgivings and misunderstandings it would be soon possible for us to remove. I appeal to those who have both the interests of the national and socialist movements at heart not to carry on controversy over this issue in a manner that can only disrupt the Socialist movement.

The question has been asked if the price we paid for unity was not incommensurate with the results. I do not think that we have paid any such price at all. By remaining neutral and by making it clear as I did on behalf of the Party, that we had ideological differences with the resolution we have taken no responsibility for certain views expressed therein. Further more, the resolution leaves affairs in the Congress exactly where they were before it was passed and therefore it places no new obstacles in our work. The Congress has been functioning on the basis of certain fundamental policies and we have been working within their framework. These fundamental policies have so far been accepted by us and therefore they create no new fetters for us.

Positive Gains

Before concluding, I wish to draw the attention of the public from this fruitless controversy to some of the positive and very far-going gains and achievements of the Tripuri Congress which should guide our action in the coming year. For those who are interested in the Socialist movement it should be a matter for gratification that throughout the session of the Congress but for one exception the Socialists and Communists acted together, thus establishing for the first time Socialist unity in practice. Even on the one occasion when there was difference among them, namely on the voting on Pantji's resolution, there was agreement to begin with. The difference arose only later. But I should like to state that the policy agreed upon between our Party and the Communists is not to utilize this difference for the sake of disrupting the Socialist movement. In my humble opinion those who are trying to exploit this difference are not doing any service to the movement and are only creating confusion and disruption in it.

From the larger national point of view Tripuri has marked a great advance and I am sure it shall be a landmark in our movement just as the Lahore Congress. In its resolution on the National Demand, the Tripuri Congress took clear and definite step forward. The resolution first of all declared that the time had now come to apply immediately the principle of self-determination to India. Secondly, it declared that the capacity of the Provincial autonomy to be of use in strengthening the country was being rapidly exhausted, thus indicating the near termination of constitutionalism. Lastly, the resolution called upon the Congress organizations and the country generally to prepare for a 'nation wide' struggle.

I particularly wish to emphasize the phrase 'nation wide'. To my mind it is this last call that we have to turn our attention and seriously prepare to give effect to. Tripuri sounded the bugle of war. Let us commence the march instead of wasting time over fruitless controversy.

¹ Achyut Patwardhan (1905–92), educated at Ahmadnagar and Banaras; Professor, Central Hindu College, Banaras Hindu University (till 1932); participated in Civil Disobedience movement (1932) and jailed; founder-member, Congress Sociality Party (1934); member, Congress Working Committee (1936); organized 'Shibirs' (education Camps) (1935–41) to teach socialism; participated in Individual Satyagraha and was imprisoned from October 1940 to April 1942 and there he wrote *Communal Triangle in India*, in collaboration with Ashoka Mehta; participated in Quit India movement, was underground (1942–46) and led underground movement and the *Prati Sarkar* (parallel government) especially in Satara and was known 'Sataryacha Sinha' (The Lion of Satara); was editor of *Janta*; gave up politics (1950) and again resumed professorship in Central Hindu College, BHU, and remained there (till 1966); in later years he was associated with Krishnamurti and his movement.



40. The National Demand: How to Enforce it?

Independent India, 26 March 1939.

26 March 1939

Apart from the fateful one moved by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, another resolution of importance passed by the Tripuri Session was on 'National Demand'. It was moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru whose speech in that connection should also be regarded as of great importance....

Interpretations are misleading. Let us be guided by the text of the resolution. As a resolution, it sounds brave enough although even as such it does not go long enough. The following is the substantial part of the long document which is replete with reminiscences and vague hopes about the future.

To the Federal part of the Act the Congress declared its uncompromising opposition and its determination to resist its imposition. The Congress declares afresh its solemn resolve to achieve independence for the nation and to have a Constitution framed for a free India through a Constituent Assembly elected by the people and without any interference by a foreign authority. No other Constitutions or attempted solutions of the problem can be accepted by the Indian people. The Congress is of the opinion that the time has come for the full application of the principle of self-determination to India so that the people of India might establish an independent democratic State by means of a Constituent Assembly.

A careful reading of these sentences compels one to ask two questions which those taking the resolution seriously must answer. It is to be assumed that a solemn resolve is also a serious resolution. The first question is, what is to be done in case a foreign authority will interfere with the Congress acting according to its solemn resolve? It is idle to make a resolution if we are not clear about all its implications, and are not equipped with a plan of action in all possible eventualities. The second question is, who is going to apply the principle of self-determination to India? This question is not so far-fetched as it may appear to the uncritical. Obviously, the sentence is not carelessly composed. The words are very deliberately chosen and the construction is purposeful. The simple straightforward declaration should be: 'The time has come for India to assert the right of self-determination or act according to the principle of self-determination'. Why is the more circumstantial formulation preferred? It is certainly not a question of language. It is quite clear that some other party is expected to apply the principle of self-determination to India. This surprising attitude is not altogether unexpected. In a statement issued to the press on the eve of his departure from London, the mover of the resolution took up an identical attitude. At that time, the critical observer of events must have been rather perplexed. But the situation is getting clearer, by and by. Further analysis of the sentence quoted from the resolution shows that the establishment of an independent democratic state by the people of India is made conditional upon the application (obviously by another Party) of the principle of self-determination to India.

The questions raised above are not frivolous. They result from a careful study of the text of the resolution and, therefore, must be answered to prove that the whole resolution is not meant to be something entirely different from what it appears to be. We may be mistaken in expressing the doubt which is occasioned by the text of the resolution itself. We shall be glad to be reassured that we are mistaken. But verbal reassurance won't do. The doubt will be removed only when the Tripuri resolution will be substituted by a more straightforward declaration of the political programme of the Congress, accompanied with a clearly defined plan of action.

With the purpose of removing the defects of the resolution, an amendment was moved in the Subjects Committee. The amendment was opposed by the mover of the resolution. If the question raised above does not rise from the resolution, and the doubt expressed by them is groundless,

there should be no reason for the mover not to accept the amendment which had no other purpose but to make explicit what is believed to be implicit in the resolution. It seems that not our doubt, but the general belief is groundless.

The mover of the resolution did not oppose the amendment on its merits. He simply brushed the amendment aside with the very significant remark that it raised fundamental issues which involved departure from the policy of the Congress reaffirmed only the day before. Had he taken the pains to explain what were the fundamental issues, and if the resolution on National Demand could have any meaning without raising them, the situation would have been clarified and the delegates, who were not already prejudiced, could vote intelligently. The mover of the amendment obviously assumed that the resolution was to organize and lead the people of India in the struggle for the assertion or conquest of the right of self-determination. In view of such talk about an uncompromising struggle against Imperialism, the assumption was quite legitimate. But all the talk seems to be only meant for the gallery.

The purpose of the resolution is not to declare the inauguration of the struggle for the capture of power by the Indian people, but to convince the imperialist rulers of India the time has come for them to apply the principle of self-determination to India, and to persuade them not to interfere in the peaceful and legitimate act of the Indian people framing a Constitution through a Constituent Assembly. Therefore, the Tripuri Congress has not made any resolution to enforce the National Demand of the Indian people; it has set up an illusion. Otherwise, why did the mover of the resolution decline to accept an amendment which only suggested a plan of action in pursuance of the resolution? His curious attitude could be justified if the original resolution contained an alternative plan of action.

It is time that all Congressmen who honestly cherish the political ideal of complete independence come to realize the simple truth that it cannot be had simply for asking. It is time for them to know that the foreign authority will never abstain from interfering when it will be challenged. The slogan for a Constituent Assembly is an empty phrase if it does not simply challenge that. If the establishment of an independent democratic state by means of a Constituent Assembly is made conditional upon some action of the foreign authority, that will never be done. The spirit of the whole resolution is to be detected in one single word—‘might’ establish. This is not a spirit of challenge. It is a spirit of supplication. The foreign authority is solemnly asked to do something so that ‘might’ have our National Demand fulfilled.

If the precious policy to which the Congress has been committed indefinitely at Tripuri compels it to be inspired with the above spirit, the sooner that policy is discarded the better for the people of India. If we are convinced that our demand is legitimate, let us be prepared to enforce it, and there is no choice of the way.

41. The Tripuri Congress: Role of the Socialists, Article Entitled ‘Turning Success into Defeat’ by M.R. Masani

Congress Socialist, 26 March 1939.

The Congress Socialist Party has seldom in its short but exciting history rendered more yeoman service to the national movement than it did at Tripuri. Yet, while the prestige of the Party stands higher than before among detached and serious nationalists, a howl about ‘vacillation’, ‘cowardice’, and even ‘betrayal’ has been sent up by some of its own members, and other interested circle in the so-called ‘Left’ are seeking to snatch advantage for themselves out of this confusion in the Party’s rank-and-file.

Comrade N. Datta Mazumdar¹, one of the Communist spokesmen in the AICC has chosen to describe the action of the CSP as 'the logical outcome of its policy of vacillation all through' in contrast to the attitude of the Communists who, according to him, 'have come to be considered the Iron Corps of the Left forces of the Congress.'

Another comrade has described our attitude as a 'policy of drift, bargain and compromise.'

Let us examine the record of the Congress Socialists in connection with the Tripuri session and all that went before and let us also examine the Communist record and find out where the charge of vacillation justly falls.

The first fact that needs to be stated is that Congress Socialist Party, unlike the Communist Party, was in no way responsible for the decision of Subhas Babu to stand for re-election as President. The CSP as a Party was not consulted by Subhas Babu nor did it express any opinion on the matter. Officially, the Party gave no instructions to those of its members who were delegates as to how to vote.

It was on the eve of the poll that Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Dev issued appeals to delegates to vote for Subhas Babu.

The grounds given in these appeals for voting for Subhas Babu were not that he was the Socialist or 'Left' candidate. On the contrary, it was made clear that it was on his standing and record as a Congressman that they recommended Subhas Babu as one whom the entire Congress should select in preference to the other candidate.

Indeed, both at Allahabad and at Tripuri in meetings of Party members, Jayaprakash made no secret of the fact that, if Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had not withdrawn at the last moment, he and many other Congress Socialists would have voted for him even as against Subhas Babu, 'Right' and 'Left' notwithstanding.

Poles Apart

The Communist stand was poles apart from ours. They were the first in the field to advocate Subhas Babu's re-election. As early as 16th October 1938 the *National Front* had editorially declared: 'We must whole-heartedly campaign for the re-election of Subhas Babu as the next Rastrapati.' On 5th February 1939 after Subhas Babu's re-election, that journal boasted: '*National Front*, through an editorial written as early as 16th October, was the first paper that proposed that Subhas Babu must re-lead the nation in the critical time that lie ahead.' Not only did they thus themselves raise stridently the slogan of 'Re-elect Subhas', but also in October 1938 Comrade P.C. Joshi actually got some of his friends in the CSP to issue a joint appeal for Subhas's re-election without the knowledge or consent of their colleagues in the CSP.

Alongside with this campaign raged the Communist campaign for a Left bloc. The *National Front* published a 'Call to Congressmen' and called for the formation of a Left bloc on its basis. On 8th January 1939 editorially the *Congress Socialist* discountenanced the suggestion for a Left bloc.

When the AICSP Executive met at Allahabad on February 18 and 19 it not only decisively and unanimously turned down that proposal for a Left bloc or any Left organization, but it went on to say that

'no effort should be spared to maintain that unity which, despite ideological differences, has been the main strength of the Congress. The Executive Committee assures the President and Mahatma Gandhi of the fullest support of the Party in maintaining this unity.'

The Party also rejected Subhas Babu's idea of a six-months' ultimatum.

The Gandhian Stand

Now let us consider the Gandhi stand on the eve of Tripuri.

On 22nd February, twelve members of the Working Committee tendered their resignations to the President. On March 19 the *Congress Socialist* published a statement by our General Secretary, Jayaprakash, regretting the resignations as a great blunder and pleading for the abandonment of the concept of 'incompatible group'.

From the start, we strained every nerve to achieve our objective. We tried to prepare a political resolution which, while giving a new direction to Congress policy, would yet secure the support of the bulk of the Congress. We placed drafts of such a resolution before Jawaharlal and Sarat Babu. This was done in co-operation with the Communists who had come to Tripuri with an ultimatum resolution in their pocket, which they now dropped. Pandit Jawaharlal's National Demand resolution, as amended in Subjects Committee, embodied the best part of our proposals.

No Response

We tried simultaneously to find a way towards the solution of the impasse that had arisen as a result of Subhas Babu's statements and election and the resignation of the Working Committee members. There we failed. We met with lack of response and an unfortunate desire to have a trial of strength on both sides.

It was distressing for us to find that our desire for unity and for avoiding a 'scrap' was not shared by those who were considered Elder Statesmen of the Congress.

There were, however, others who also wanted a solution of the impasse and to end non-co-operation by the Gandhian group—but on different terms.

They wanted a solution based on a trial of strength, not on mutual goodwill and give and take. These were the Congress ministers led by Sjt C. Rajagopalachari. They won—with the Pant resolution as their inducement.

We did not like the resolution as it stood. There were many things in the resolution which we gladly accepted—the continuance of Gandhiji's leadership and of the fundamental policy of peaceful and legitimate means which Gandhiji had given to the Congress; the expression of confidence in the retiring Working Committee; the stipulation that the new Working Committee should, in view of the approaching crisis, enjoy Gandhiji's implicit confidence. There were things we jibed at—such as the claim that 'Gandhiji alone' could lead the Congress and the country to victory.

Subhas Babu too disliked the resolution, but he was not prepared to treat it as a motion of no-confidence and to resign if it was carried. Panditji too make it clear that it was not a vote of censure.

Price of Unity

We had to consider whether we were prepared to pay the price for unity and joint work demanded by this resolution. One thing was clear, we should make attempts to improve the resolution by amendments, which we did. But should we support, oppose or abstain on the vote if our amendments failed? I was one of the those who felt from the start that we should in no event vote against the resolution. The Party Executive, however, decided by a majority otherwise.

Then came the open session, with its rowdy scenes and the un-expected opposition of Sjt Sarat Bose to the National Demand resolution, moved and seconded by Jayaprakash and Narendra Deva, respectively and his attack on the sincerity of those who had sponsored it.

So far as the bloc which had till then functioned was concerned, Sarat Babu's action put an end to it. As Jayaprakash has put it:

‘Till then we were rolling along enmeshed in the logic of our action in supporting Subhas Babu at the election and were functioning in a bloc with others of his supporters.’

Free Initiative

Now at last, the CSP was able to resume its independent initiative. Opinion in the Party Executive now swung overwhelmingly for abstention, accompanied by a statement by Jayaprakash. The logic of events, moving faster than anyone had expected, had freed the Party from the Left bloc in which it had been enmeshed in spite of its Allahabad decision, and had brought it on the rails again.

What of the Communists? In the Subjects Committee, they too had voted against the resolution, though between the speeches of a Lohia and a Dutta Mazumdar there was little in common.

When it came to the open session, the Communists too had apparently been going overnight through a searching of heart and early in the morning we learnt that their Party too had decided to abstain on the vote.

But at the last moment, on the floor of the house, we were informed that the Communists had reversed their decision and decided to move amendments and oppose the resolution. So much for the ‘Iron Corps’ which could not withstand the clamour of its own infantile rank-and-file!

Compared to the twists and turns of Comrade Datta Muzumdar’s Party, the line of the CSP has been straight as an arrow. We at least did not shout ourselves hoarse over Subhas Babu’s re-election and then develop cold feet, we did not go all out for a Left bloc and then, when we saw how it functioned at Tripuri, draw back in pained surprise at the ‘disruptive and opportunistic moves’ (National Front) of our ‘Left’ allies; we did not go to Tripuri with a six-months’ ultimatum in our pocket and then drop it at dead of night in the Nurbada river; we did not decide early in the morning to abstain from the vote in the plenary session and then, when the debate started, move amendments and vote against the resolution.

But to end on a note of self-criticism, we also took long to gauge the solution, we did in the end what we ought to have done from the very beginning. We were inclined to be too frightened of what our rank and file would think or say.

By not recognizing in time that the Pant resolution was a come-down from the attitude of non-co-operation and a return, though grudgingly made, to joint working, we turned our success into a self-invited defeat.

¹ Niharendu Dutt Majumdar (1903–99), born in Bijitpur, Mymensingh, and educated in Shantiniketan, Dacca, Calcutta and London; came in touch with the Labour Party and trade unionism in London from 1926; on return, joined the Bengal Labour Party in 1933, took part in trade union activities and came close to the CPI; functioned in the Port and Dockers’ Union in Calcutta and led the famous Dockers’ strike (involving 14,000 workers) in November–December 1934; joined the CPI in 1936 and played a leading role in the Jute Mills strike in 1937; became MLA in 1937 from Barrackpore; left CPI in 1939 over differences on the Tripuri Congress session; organized Bolshevik Party, opposed the ‘Imperialist War’ and joined the ‘Quit India’ movement; in prison 1942–45; elected MLA again in from Barrackpore in 1946 and joined the Congress; held important portfolios in consecutive Dr B.C. Roy ministries; later moved away from trade unionism and politics, but remained a successful Barrister in Calcutta High Court.

42. The Tripuri Congress: Role of the Left, Article Entitled ‘Doubts Analysed: Was it Timidity?’ by A.K. Ghosh

National Front, 26 March 1939.

Everything was bungled at Tripuri, because we followed a vacillating policy. We had our draft resolution, we had our slogans. What we should have done was to stand up before the delegates

and put forth our line. Those who agreed with us would have joined our ranks or at least voted with us. Those who did not, would have been exposed. Instead of following this bold, clear-cut policy, what we actually did was to wobble and compromise at every step. All this is due to our timidity, our over-eagerness to line up with others, who would not go far enough.

This is how some comrades evaluate our role at Tripuri. Is this criticism correct? If not, why is it being made?

What the comrades who make this criticism forget is the role that the Left has to play today, particularly in view of its greatly increased strength on the one hand and the imminence of struggle on the other. To them, Congress is an arena where the Right and the Left measure their strength. To them, the slogan 'Unite the entire Left and on the basis of this unity, move the whole Congress forward' is nothing but a manoeuvre. The Left has to smash the Right and establish its own leadership and within this Left the Communists have to establish their own leadership by exposing, weakening and smashing every other organized section (the CSP particularly) by putting forward their own slogans, boldly clearly and decisively. This is the way to unity!

Supposing this line were followed at Tripuri what would have happened? The confidence resolution sought to side-track the main political issue before the nation. It posed Bose against Gandhiji. It demanded adherence to the fundamental policies of the Congress. It demanded confidence in the Working Committee. Should not we have come out sharply criticizing the Working Committee, demanding repudiation of Gandhiji's political line and all that? As a matter of fact that would have been the surest way of splitting the Left itself and playing straight into the hands of the Right. Instead of that we sought to unite the entire Left against the most disruptive features of the resolution on the basis of amendments which could be accepted by the Congress as a whole, and that enabled us to get the support of as many as 130 members of the AICC, that is, almost of the entire Left.

This would have a far more sobering effect on the Right wing, would make them realize the volume of discontent with the existing policy and would thus help in moving the whole Congress forward.

But Roy propounded his own line, his own policy. We failed to do that—our critics would say.

This criticism arises from the notion that the Congress is merely a platform for arising one's own or the party's views and not primarily and essentially a national organization, the moving of which, even one step forward, towards struggle is the greatest political gain.

And in order to move the Congress in this way towards struggle, it is necessary first of all to secure complete unity of the Left, it is necessary to 'compromise' with the other parties and sections, it is necessary to give up slogans which we previously thought could be the basis of unity but which we found in reality could not be the basis. This is not 'timidity' but revolutionary realism.

II. TILL THE FORMATION OF THE FORWARD BLOC

43. Legalize Communist Party

National Front, 2 April 1939.

UNITED PROVINCES

Cawnpore

Cawnpore witnessed its first public meeting under the auspices of the Mazdoor Sabha, since the beginning of the communal riots, to demand the legalization of the Communist Party of India. The meeting attracted a vast number of Hindu and Muslim workers and the Tilak Hall was packed

to capacity. More than a dozen speakers addressed the gathering prominent among them being Shri Hariharnath Shastri,¹ Ex-President Trade Union Congress and the Cawnpore Mazdoor Sabha, Santosh Chandra Kapoor, General Secretary, Mazdoor Sabha, Arjun Arora and Sher Khan, S.S. Yusuf, President, Mazdoor Sabha, was in the chair. The following resolution was unanimously passed:

‘This meeting of the workers of Cawnpore declares that the liberty of press, platform and organization are the inalienable rights of every citizen. The meeting notes with pleasure that as a result of the growing might of the Indian people the civil liberties of our people have been considerably extended. The meeting, however, condemns the continued ban on the Communist Party of India, depriving the Communists of the right to organize. The meeting reiterates the demand for the legalization of the CPI already voiced by all freedom-loving citizens. The meeting further appeals to the Congress Ministers to lift the ban from the Provincial Committees of the CPI in their provinces.’

Allahabad

The public meeting in Allahabad to demand the legalization of the Communist Party was called by the following: Maulana Mohamed Shahid, President District Political Conference, Allahabad; Sjt Amarnath Kapoor, staunch Gandhite-leader; Salik Ram Jaiswal, Secretary, District Congress Committee; Radhey Shiam Pathak, Secretary, City Congress Committee; Dr Z.A. Ahmed, Secretary, Provincial Congress Committee and General Secretary, CSP, Allahabad; S.S. Zaheer, General Secretary Press Workers Union; S.A. Faiz and D.P. Pande, President and Secretary respectively of the Railway Coolies Union; Om P. Sangal, General Secretary Motor Workers Union; Bhishma Arya, Secretary Kisan Sangh; Ram Naresh Shukla and Gopal Das, President and General Secretary respectively of the Allahabad Students Association; Harsha Deo Malaviya and Manmath Nath Gupta.

The meeting was presided over by Maulana Mohammed Shahid and among others who spoke was Shri Keshav Dev Malaviya,² MLA.

The resolution passed declared among other things that the legalization of the Communist Party will strengthen the Congress and the Nation’s fight for Independence.

Orai

The resolution of the public meeting held at Kalpi on Communist Party Legalization Day stated:

‘By banning the Communist Party the Government of India has long denied the Indian Working Class the right to organize its own party.’

BENGAL

Calcutta

Several processions of workers and students culminated in the public meeting at Shraddhanand Park. Thousands of citizens had collected. Mr C.E. Gibbon of the Anglo-Indian Civil Liberties Union, presiding over the meeting said:

‘We are assembled here this evening for the sole purpose of demanding the immediate lifting of the ban from the Communist Party of India. This demand was made a year ago, by thousands of Congressmen, workers and peasants but nothing appears to have been done so far. I consider that it was the duty and is still the duty of the Indian National Congress and, in particular, the Congress Ministries in the several provinces to take immediate steps to bring pressure on the Central Government for the lifting of the ban without any further delay. The Congress Ministries have had a whole year to consider this important question—this is certainly remarkable!—in the

light that the Indian National Congress is pledged to restore and ensure full civil liberties and democratic rights, to all sections of the people of India.'

Sjts Hemanta Kumar Bose, Somnath Lahiri, Kshitish Prasad Chatterjee and others addressed the meeting. The resolution demanding the right of the Communist Party to exist and function openly was unanimously passed.

Dacca

The Communist Party Day was celebrated on the initiative of the supporters and sympathizers of *National Front*. An appeal for legalizing the Communist Party, in which the aims and present activities of the Communists were stated, was signed by distinguished public men, and distributed. On the morning of the 20th a cycle procession of about 100 cyclists moved round the city for about 2½ hours popularizing the slogans of the Day. In the evening a meeting attended by about 2000 people was held.

Besides the meeting in Dacca town, six meetings were held in the neighbouring villages.

Barisal

The Communist Party Day was duly observed with a procession and a mass meeting held at the Aswini Kumar Hall. Sjt Devendra Nath Ghosh presided. Several speakers including Sjts Biren Das Gupta, Suresh Ganguly and Amiya Kumar Das Gupta stressed 'the need of unifying' the Leftist elements in the Congress on a common programme of action to save the Congress from its present drift to constitutionalism, and for strengthening and consolidating the anti-Imperialist front for the impending drive for independence.

The resolution severely condemned the imperialist Government for throttling the movement for freedom of the Indian masses by placing a ban on the Communist Party and demanded its immediate withdrawal. The Congress Ministries were urged to legalize the Communist Party in their respective provinces.

Chittagong

Various Congress Committees, the District Kisan Committee and the Students Federation jointly organized the meeting for demanding the withdrawal of the ban on the Communist Party. Sjt Lokman Khan Sherwani, Vice-President of the DCC and a member of the BPCC was in the chair. The people were urged to sign a memorandum that will be sent to the Bengal Government demanding the withdrawal of the ban on the Party.

Narayanganj E.B. Ry.

'We observed the "Lift the Ban Day" yesterday. It was a brilliant success. In the morning some of us on bicycles (13 cycles) took a round of the town.... In the evening a meeting was held with a prominent and honoured Congressman of the town, Sjt Rabindranath Banerji, in the chair. The gathering came to 600. Judged by the usual gatherings here it must be regarded as unexpectedly big. An appeal signed by representatives of all anti-imperialist organizations and a good number of prominent persons in the town was widely distributed (2000 copies).... A prominent woman Congress worker, Smt. Kironbala Rudra (who suffered imprisonment during the CD Movement and as such is honoured by every body) spoke at the meeting...'—writes Anil Chandra Mukerji.

The resolution demanded the lifting of the ban, asking the Bengal Government to recommend accordingly to the Central Government, and further demanded the immediate release of the political prisoners and the restoration of full civil liberties. The meeting decided to send a detailed record of all the proceedings to the Hon'ble Home Minister, Government of Bengal.

Nabadwip

In the home town of Com. Muzaffar Ahmed a huge public meeting was held befitting both the service and the undying ardour of the veteran Communist leader and the occasion, the 20th March, the anniversary of the Meerut arrests, of which he was the central figure. The resolution said that it was the birthright of every man to speak out his opinions. The Communist Party was a section of democratic opinion. The Communist Parties have freedom in democratic countries like England and France, so the public meeting of Nabadwip demanded the same for the Communist Party of India.

Berhampur

A meeting held at Congress maidan unanimously passed a resolution demanding legalization of the Communist Party. Communist Party Day was also celebrated at Malihati village.

ASSAM

Silchar

A mammoth meeting was held under the joint auspices of the Congress Committee, the CSP, Youth Association, students Federation, Chabagan Mazdoor Union, Dock Mazdoor Union, Krishak Organizing Committee and the Journalists Association. The resolution passed said, inter alia, that, 'India's struggle for freedom is only a part of the world-wide struggle against Imperialism and Fascism, and the Communists Parties, throughout the world, are leading this brave struggle everywhere and on all fronts. Hence in the meeting's opinion a legalized and active Communist Party in India will add new blood to the fighting people of India.'

TAMILNAD

Madras

Meeting held under auspices of the Madras CSP and Madras Provincial Trade Union Congress.

Mr S. Someswara Rao said that the aim of the Communist Party was the amelioration of the masses.

Mr A.S.K. Iyengar said that the continued ban imposed on the Communist Party by the Government of India was a flagrant violation of fundamental rights of freedom of association and organization.

It was a wrong impression that Communists believed in methods of violence.

The resolution urging the lifting of the ban was passed unanimously.

Another meeting was held by the Mambalam National Youths Association and Congress Committee of Thyaganayanagar.

Vellore and Ayyampet

Public meetings were held urging the Government to remove the ban on the Communist Party.

ANDHRA

Bezwada and Cocanada

A huge meeting was held under the auspices of the CSP at Bezwada. Mr Vasudeva Rao, General Secretary, Andhra Provincial Ryots Association moving the resolution urged that it was the duty of every Congressman to raise the demand for the legalization of the Communist Party in the interests of the national movement.

Com. Sundarayya, General Secretary Andhra CSP after referring to the statements of Dr Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mrs Sarojini Naidu who demanded the lifting of the ban, appealed to the Congress Ministries to try to lift the ban and implement the Karachi resolution on fundamental rights.

A procession of workers at Cocanada marched through out the main thoroughfares under the slogan: 'Lift the ban!'

GUJARAT

Ahmedabad

The Communist Party Day was observed under the joint auspices of the CSP and the Mill Kamgar Union in two meetings.

Sjts Bhogilal Gandhi, Ranchod Patel and G.M. Khan expressed surprise and regret at the attitude of the Bombay Ministry in relation to the demand for the legalization of the Communist Party.

The Communist Party should be allowed to function under the same laws which bind all political parties in India.

MAHARASHTRA

Amalner and Ahmednagar

Mass meetings were held in the respective places under the auspices of the leading citizens and organizations. Com. Achyut Patwardhan presided over the meeting at Ahmednagar.

Com. Patwardhan, in moving the resolution for lifting the ban, emphasized the importance of the question from the point of view of civil liberties and also because of the change which has taken place in the attitude of the people towards Socialism, which had become a living belief and an achievable end in their eyes.

SIND

Tando Jam

A mass meeting of the peasants of Tando Jam was held on the 20th March under the presidentship of Comrade Sipahimalan Gopal.

The following resolution was unanimously carried:

'This meeting of the Haris (peasants) of Tando Jam does emphatically object against the imposition of the ban upon the Communist Party of India. Every organization should have freedom to propagate its views and work as a legal public organization. Therefore, this mass meeting calls upon the Provincial Ministries to recommend to the Central Government to remove the ban and also calls upon the Congress President to direct the Congress Ministries to do the needful in this direction.'

¹ Hariharnath Shastri (1904–53); born in Wazirpur village, Ballia, UP and was educated at Saran and Benaras; participated in the Non-Cooperation movement, 1921, and was jailed for one year; secretary to Lala Lajpat Rai, 1923–25; organized trade unions in the sugar industry and the railways in north India; one of the founder-members of the Congress Socialist Party, 1934; nominated to the UP Legislative Council, 1937; member, Constituent Assembly, 1946; also one of the founder-member of INTUC, 1946.

² K.D. Malaviya (1903–81): Born at Allahabad, joined the Congress in 1921 and was General Secretary, UPPCC for ten years; member UP Legislative Assembly, 1946–51; Minister, Development and Industries, UP, 1947–51; left Congress and joined KMPP in 1951; rejoined Congress and was member, Lok Sabha, 1952; as Minister he held various portfolios at the Centre, 1952–63, 1968–69, and 1974–77; Vice-Chancellor, Gurukul University, Haridwar; President, All-India Co-operative Union and National Federation of Industrial Co-operative Ltd.

44. Tripuri—A Review

New Age, Vol. 5, No. 11, April 1939.*April 1939*

Tripuri reflected all the weaknesses and defects of the national movement at the present stage. The Congress was faced with an unprecedented crisis. It met at a time when both the national and international situation demanded bold decisions. But it was the organizational crisis which overshadowed all and dominated the entire session.

The Background

Since after the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Congress organization, its influence and popularity have grown at a tremendous pace. 'The National Congress has increasingly come to represent the consciousness of the Indian people, and has embodied their urge for freedom and independence. This immense growth of the mass influence of the Congress has not been fully reflected in the leadership of the Congress. While the masses are increasingly on the move and mass struggles are bursting out on all sides, the leadership continues to follow a policy of drift and compromise. As expressed by Gandhiji at the time of Office Acceptance, the policy dominating the Congress has been one of using the Ministries to avoid revolution on the one hand and a mass civil disobedience on an unheard of scale, on the other. The working of Ministries has, if anything, intensified the tendency of drift.

The failure of the Congress leadership to reflect the new urge and consciousness of the masses has resulted in the increasing disillusionment of the Congress ranks in the policy of drift. Subhas Babu's re-election in the face of the opposition of the dominant leadership of the Congress was an indication of this radicalization in the Congress ranks, of the dissatisfaction with this policy dictated from the top.

Subhas's election by the delegates was a vote for a militant policy on the part of the Congress. Gandhiji and the Right wing members of the Working Committee however, took it as a vote of no-confidence in themselves and the latter resigned from the Working Committee precipitating a crisis in the national organization. Subhas's victory in the election did not imply lack of confidence in the old leadership of the Congress. It was a mandate to the same leadership for the new policy of preparation and struggle. This mandate the old leadership refused to accept and came forward with the theory of 'homogeneous cabinet' as if the mandate of the delegates was not for the Congress as a whole but for Subhas Babu alone.

Issues Confused

Events moved fast after Subhas Babu's election. The resignation of the old guards of the Working Committee threw the entire country into confusion. The political considerations which had decided the voting in favour of Subhas had been thrown into the background. The solution of the organizational crisis which had been precipitated by the Right had come to occupy the foremost place. Tripuri met at this juncture with the heart of every Congressman throbbing with anxiety. The fate of the Congress and the entire national movement was in the balance. Will Tripuri mean a split? Will it be able to overcome the crisis? These were the questions dominating the minds of all on the eve of Tripuri Congress.

The Right wing leaders had propounded the theory of a homogeneous cabinet. This meant complete withdrawal of the co-operation of the Right and ultimately forcing Bose to resign his presidentship. Homogeneity plea only meant that the Right wing was propounding the view of incompatibility of the two wings of the Congress. Mahatma Gandhi had written in this strain just

after the Delhi AICC walk-out and it seemed as if the theory was going to be put in practice and the Damocles's Sword which had been hanging over the Congress was going to fall and have its victim.

While the Right was thus taking its stand on the basis of a disruptive policy, there was a section of the Left which was equally going to the other extreme and threatened disruption from the Left.

The Swing to the Left—Its Limitations and Short-Comings

During the course of the last three or four years, the Left has gained increasing strength. Dissatisfied with the policy of drift followed by the leadership, more and more ranks have turned towards the Left which was showing the way out of the difficulties. The Leftward swing has been rapid and swift. But the parties of the Left were not so swift in absorbing the new elements which were groping their way towards them. The Communists and Socialists were not able to give these new Left elements the education and training which would make them conscious Lefts, and enable them to play their proper role in the national struggle. Organizationally, the place of most of them was within the CSP, but the CSP was not expanding; it has been marking time for a long period. These new Left elements fell an easy prey to certain adventurist leaders in the Congress who, due to their old factional past, were not so much concerned with the Congress accepting the new policy of struggle, as with getting control of the Congress organization. Congress Working Committee to them was a pawn in the game and it had somehow to be brought under control. These elements also supported the homogeneous cabinet proposal, only from the other side. They wanted a Working Committee entirely of the Left and of themselves in which the old leadership was to find no place. The most consistent exponent of this theory was Roy who in the course of a manifesto distributed at Tripuri said: 'Irrespective of the attitude of the older leaders, re-constitution of the Supreme Executive of the Congress must take place as a logical consequence of the result of the presidential election.' For, according to him, 'otherwise the Congress will not be given an alternative leadership and the historic necessity of a consciously revolutionary leadership will not be fulfilled.'

Between these die-hards from the Right and the Left Congress seemed to be facing disunity and disruption. Their tug-of-war had already diverted the whole issue before Tripuri away from the political plane. The problem of the change of policy, of the adoption of a policy of struggle and conscious direction had already been relegated to the rear.

The Possibilities

Tripuri Congress presented immense possibilities. The majority of the Congress delegates had voted in favour of a new policy when British Imperialism was faced with a grave crisis in international arena. Its policy of appeasement, instead of succeeding in its end has whetted the appetite of the Fascist powers. When the stocks of British Imperialism stood so low, it was exactly the time when the national forces were maturing in their revolutionary strength. Workers, peasants, students, all sections of the population have been rising to a new awakening and consciousness. The people in the States were rising from their slumbers of centuries and were on their march. This was the opportunity to launch an offensive on the part of the Congress against the proposed Federal Scheme, against Imperialist domination itself and achieve the independence of the country. As a corollary to this new policy of the Congress, there was the need for a united leadership which would properly reflect the desires and aspirations of the Congress. The united leadership in which both the Left and the Right could co-operate and enable the Congress to make the advance that national and international situation demanded. With the election of Bose the possibilities of such an advance opened before the Congress and a historic step forward, by which the Congress was to

make a breach with the past policy of drift and prepare for launching an offensive, and have a leadership which would unify and head the entire forces of the Congress and the nation to participate in this struggle, was on the order of the day.

The Communists and Socialists realized the possibilities of the situation and consciously worked in the direction of making this advance. They formulated the tasks facing Tripuri. Congress should emerge as a Congress of unity and struggle, struggle through unity for struggle. They moved for getting the Congress to accept a programme of struggle which would be the best guarantee of revolutionary unity.

Unity and Struggle

A draft of the National Demand resolution agreed between the Socialists and Communists was prepared which after reviewing the increasing strength of the forces of struggle declared that, 'taking into account the situation in the country and outside, the Congress feels that the time has come to lead all this rising tide into a nation-wide attack at the very existence of imperialist domination and secure for the people of India a Constitution of their own making.' To this clarion call for an immediate offensive was attached a concrete programme of action for the Congress 'to put the organization on a fighting basis', to eliminate factors making communal dissensions and disruption, to build a much stronger front against imperialism by drawing closer the organizations of the workers and peasants, to develop the fighting capacity of the people, by the Ministries utilizing the opportunity of offices more fully, to co-ordinate and develop the struggles of the peoples of the various states as an integral part of the national movement, the creation of a national volunteer corps, so that by the time the Congress met again a fit situation may be created for the enforcement of the national demand for Independence.

The resolution if passed would have been a charter of struggle and would have given the lead to the nation for the final struggle for independence.

The Communists and Socialists not only agreed among themselves, but also approached the Left nationalists with the agreed draft and got their consent for the same. The entire Left stood united for pressing this programme of struggle upon the Congress and putting the Congress on different rails. The first condition of success in getting this programme accepted was the unity of the Left itself which had been fulfilled. It was now possible to press it upon other sections of the Congress, so as to make it the programme of the Congress as a whole. Jawahar was approached and he agreed in substance with the draft. Jawahar's agreement was of great importance, for with him in favour there was a fair chance of the resolution being passed by the Congress itself. But while the programme was accepted by the entire Left, its implications were not grasped. Programme of struggle necessitates united Congress and only unity in the entire national ranks could enable this programme to be carried through. While there was a section of the Right which neither liked this programme nor wanted a really united Congress, there was a section of the Left as well which accepted this fighting programme but would not accept its necessary implication of fighting for maintaining the unity of the Congress, and of working for a united Working Committee which would have the co-operation of both wings of the Congress. They were thinking in terms of a Left Working Committee and working for the same. It was necessary for the United Left to take the initiative for proposing a united Working Committee as well, in order to supplement their proposal for the united fighting programme. Here the Left failed and allowed Tripuri to be turned into a Congress which shirked real issues of the movement and carried on fight on non-political personal plane.

The Communists and Socialists put their entire weight in favour of a united Working Committee. They attempted to win the support of the Right as well as the Lefts in favour of this. But they met

with concerted opposition from both the quarters. With Bose as the president, the Left was in a position to seize the initiative and put forward the proposal of a united Working Committee. Such a proposal on Bose's part would have rallied the Congress except the disruptive elements of extreme Right. It would have enabled us to act as the unifiers of the Congress. Those who would have opposed the proposals would have exposed themselves as disruptors. Under the united pressure of the Left, Centre and the reasonable elements of the Right, Congress unity would have been forged on the basis of united Working Committee and a sound basis for a militant fighting programme of the Congress would have been prepared.

The President's Failure

This was not to be. The proposal of the Communists and Socialists for making a move in this direction was not liked by the Rashtrapati probably under pressure from the nationalist Left elements who wanted an exclusive Left Working Committee or at least a Working Committee with a clear majority for the Left. The failure of Bose to take the initiative left the field free to the Right and they were not slow to take advantage of the situation.

Right Seizes the Initiative

With signatures of more than 100 AICC members they sponsored a resolution in the AICC wherein they proposed the unity of the Congress, but a unity which was on terms most advantageous to the Right.

Pant's resolution embodied the Right wing's method of bringing about unity in the Congress. It attempted to restore the domination of the Right wing in the supreme organ of the Congress. It was not a move for a united Working Committee in which the Right and Left would co-operate; it was for installing a Right Working Committee with which the Left must co-operate unconditionally. The resolution even administered a rebuke to the President who as the representative of the Left had got elected to the Presidential chair. Thus the resolution restored unity in the Congress by demanding complete surrender of the Left.

The failure of the Left to take the initiative in favour of unity, enabled the Right to capitalize all the sentiments for unity in favour of this resolution. The mover made a fervent appeal for unity in the Congress ranks and asked all those who wanted unity to support the resolution. The Left was put on the defensive. Instead of coming out as unifiers, they had to plead and argue that they also stood for unity but on terms fair to both the wings. The Left was put to the necessity of moving amendments to get those portions deleted, which militated against real unity, and which in effect were meant to squeeze the Left.

While the entire Left could not be united in favour of a positive lead for a united Working Committee, it was possible, after some differences, to unite all the Left elements except the small group round Roy in favour of the amendments to Pant's resolution.

The position taken by the Left was clear. Unity in the Congress ranks was absolutely indispensable, for only a united Congress could lead the country against imperialism. At the present, when we give a call to the nation for a nation-wide struggle against imperialist domination, it is not the time to emphasize our ideological differences with Gandhiji and his followers. We have differences with Gandhiji, we will never give up our right to speak about them, but right now Gandhiji's co-operation and guidance is essential, we therefore accept that under Gandhiji's leadership a united Working Committee must be given the task to prepare the country for launching the offensive against Imperialism.

There were voices in the Left which were against the acceptance of Gandhiji's leadership. They would emphasize the necessity of over-throwing the same. It appeared opportunistic to

them to consent to Gandhian leadership. Little do they realize, however, that they are taking an abstract point of view. The task at Tripuri was not to popularize our critique of Gandhism, with a view to ultimately—sometimes in future—bring the Congress under our leadership. The task was now and here to commit the whole Congress to that forward step which would enable us to launch a struggle against imperialism. Those who would care for the immediate advance and who would see that this advance alone could be the stepping stone for more advance in future had no hesitation in considering Gandhian leadership as inevitable for the present stage. It is only the infantile babblers who would think that their principles are so weak as to be in danger of being lost sight of, unless they protested in season and out of season, who think that their revolutionary purism would be lost if they accept Gandhian leadership even though it be for launching the struggle against imperialism, in short only those who value words more than struggle, could protest against the stand taken by the Left. The Left unequivocally came forward to point out the undesirable features of the resolution. They protested against the positions which implied lack of confidence in the democratically elected President, against the attempt made in the resolution to reconstitute the domination of the Right and made an appeal for modifying the resolution so as to transform it in favour of a united Congress and a united Working Committee.

A Moral Victory

In fighting for the amendments to the resolution, the Left was really fighting for genuine unity in the national ranks. The entire strength of the Left was being put in favour of the policy of forging a united Congress, the fittest instrument for national struggle. The Left was therefore able to mobilize many centre elements. It could win the sympathies of a large mass of delegates. Even when the right refused to modify the resolution, and pressed it to vote, the Left went to vote with the sympathizers of the centre and of many of those also who voted in favour of the resolution. The left mustered 135 against 218 of the Right, the highest votes that the Left has yet got in the history of the Congress. It was clear that though defeated in votes, the moral victory was of the Left, the moral sympathies were with them and the delegates would record a higher voting strength in favour of the Left.

The Landslide

But the lessons of the entire developments seem to have been lost upon a section of the Left. They did not realize that they could win and make any advance only to the extent that they fought for additional unity, that the task of the Left is not to work for sectional gains, but to strive their best for national advance, and to the extent that they do that, they advance their own strength and the strength of the nation. The extreme Left section failing to see this obvious truth reinforced by the experience at Tripuri, easily got provoked and staged the rowdy demonstration in the open session. The Communists and Socialists had forestalled some such ugly developments and prepared their ranks to fight against any such move. But a small element who style themselves as 'Left' alienated the sympathies of the centre and prepared for the landslide of the votes on the following day. Sarat Babu's stand on the National Demand resolution still further exposed the Left nationalists as opportunists. The National Demand resolution certainly did not embody all that the Left wanted but it marked a great step forward and enabled us to take the Congress as a whole in the direction of a fighting programme. Sarat Babu's opposition to the resolution as a whole made it impossible for the Left to stand united and further alienated the sympathies of those who stood for a militant programme, on the basis of a united Congress.

A Session of Lost Opportunities

Next day's debacle was a foregone conclusion. The moral victory of the Left in the Subjects Committee had been transformed into a moral victory of the Right by the adventurist acts of the irresponsible 'Left'. The great opportunity of making a historic advance in the development of the united Congress was thus lost. For this the extreme Right element was certainly responsible to a great extent. But the adventurist Left was also responsible to a greater extent, first by refusing to allow the united Left to take the initiative for a united Working Committee and then by creating the scene in the open session and thus preventing all chances of utilizing the pressure of the mass of delegates to force the Right to modify the resolution. Tripuri is a session of lost opportunities for the Left because of the irresponsible anti-united front and ultra-sectarian attitude of a section of the left. This failure of a section of the Left enabled the Right wing to concentrate the attention of the entire Congress on Pant's resolution to the extent of pushing the real issues of struggle to the rear. Nonetheless, the Tripuri Congress has marked a real advance in its political decisions.

The original draft of Jawaharlal was partially based upon the agreed draft of the Left. It declared that the time has come for the full application of the principle of self-determination to India, so that the people of India might establish an independent democratic state by means of a Constituent Assembly. It, however, still lacked the operative part and did not indicate what the Congress decides to do in order to achieve this goal. The joint amendment of the Communists and Socialists attempted to remove this deficiency. But Jawaharlal himself came forward to accept the central idea of the amendment and incorporated in the resolution that 'with a view to prepare the country for a nation-wide struggle, this Congress calls upon all parts of the Congress organizations, Congress Provincial Governments and the people generally' to eliminate communal disruption, co-ordinate the work of Provincial Governments with work outside the legislatures and to strengthen the Congress organization, 'so as to make it a still more effective organ of the People's will.'

For Nation-wide Struggle

The National Demand resolution marks a definite step forward. For the first time, it calls upon the Congress 'to prepare for a nation-wide struggle'. The Haripura resolution on Federation simply reiterated the Congress opposition to the Federation, and declared that the Congress would combat it whenever it was imposed, thus leaving the initiative to imperialism to choose its own time and opportunity to inaugurate the Federation. It implied that the Congress would not seize the initiative on its own. But the National Demand resolution makes an estimation of the national and international situation and declares that the time has come for preparing the country to launch a nation-wide struggle, it calls upon the Congress and the people to prepare for such struggle. The resolution thus, while not calling upon for an immediate offensive, gives us the basis for moving the entire Congress, for preparing for a mighty national struggle in the immediate future and thus take the Congress on the road of mass movement and away from the present policy of drift.

The resolution on the States Peoples' struggles also registers some advance over the Haripura resolution. The policy of non-intervention in the States has been given up. But the advance in the resolution only reflects what already constituted the practice towards the movement in the States. The initiative to organize and co-ordinate the States' struggles is still lacking in the decision over States problem. Put as in the case of the National Demand resolution, the resolution does provide a basis for an increasing identification of the Congress with the struggles of the States' Peoples, and the initiative and work of the Left can force the Congress to co-ordinate and unify these struggles to a greater extent and thus prepare both the British Indian and the States' people for the coming nation-wide offensive.

Tripuri Congress places a great responsibility on the Left. United Left can capitalize the political advance made in the Tripuri resolutions and lead the united Congress on to the path of struggle and offensive against imperialism, an objective which we have cherished for years and which is now almost within our grasp. For this, we need the strength of the entire Left directed towards the sole purpose of popularizing the National Demand resolution, of politically and organizationally preparing the country for the call given in the resolution, always bearing in mind that the National Demand can only be achieved through unity and struggle. Energetic work for both will enable us to repair the damage done at Tripuri, to recapture the opportunity lost there and to take the country nearer to its goal of independence.

We must, however, sound a note of warning against the disruptive tendencies already at work. There is a section of the Right which wants to go back upon the repeated assurance that Pant's resolution did not mean a vote of censure upon the President, which is trying to worsen matters and which seems to think that the passing of the resolution is a blank card to them to launch an offensive against the Left, thus giving free rein to disruption in the Congress. There is also a section of the Left which would refuse to accept the verdict of Tripuri and think of going behind it by devious means. Both will have disastrous consequences. The duty of the genuine Left, of every Congressman is clear to prevent disruption from either side and to seriously set about the task of preparing for the coming struggle which both the national and international situation is beckoning us to start.

45. Fulfil the Pledge

National Front, 16 April 1939.

The 13th of April has come and gone. The prisoners of Bengal remain behind the bars.

One year ago Gandhiji advised the people of Bengal to suspend agitation. 'I would urge workers not to hold demonstrations, meetings and the like wise—negotiations are going on,' said Gandhiji.

His order was obeyed. All agitation was stopped.

What was the result? What has been the outcome?

For five months negotiations dragged on. The people waited and watched. The initiative rested with Huq and Nazimuddin—tools of Imperialism.

In October last the Bengal Government came out with a scheme which meant virtual refusal to fulfil the demand made by Gandhiji on behalf of the nation.

Yes the challenge was not accepted. Countrywide agitation was not launched.

And today 150 politicals still continue to rot in prison. Gandhiji's pledge to the prisoners remain unfulfilled.

What is the Bengal Government afraid of? The prisoners have one and all abjured faith in terrorism. Those who have been released have thrown themselves heart and soul into the national struggle. Their release has strengthened the Congress.

This is exactly what the Government fears, this is exactly what it wants to prevent. It knows that the release of the prisoners would be looked upon as victory for the Congress, would enhance the prestige and influence of the Congress, would bring added strength to the ranks of national fighters. That is why our comrades have not been freed.

But how does the Bengal Government dare to reject the people's demand? How does it dare defy Gandhiji?

Because it hopes that its challenge would not be accepted. The basis of this hope is the attitude that our national leadership has adopted towards the vital problem of political prisoners. The basis of this hope is the general tendency towards compromise, the general desire to avoid clashes

with the bureaucracy, that have been the marked features of the policy of our national leadership during the last two years.

Retreat has emboldened reaction. The nation's pledge remains unredeemed.

If a national crisis on the issue of political prisoners is threatened, if that threat is backed up by popular demonstrations all over the country, if the Congress Ministries and the Congress organizations unite in making the demand for the release of political prisoners irresistible, there is no power that can keep our comrades away from us, in gloomy prisons. This is the lesson that the last ministerial crisis taught us.

With its Ministries in eight provinces, with the power and influence that it wields all over the country, the Congress can smash the resistance of Huq and Nazimuddin if the release of the Bengal politicals is made a national demand and nationwide agitation is launched to enforce it.

Our comrades in prison feel that they have been deserted by us. It is reported that the prisoners at Dum Dum and Alipur are contemplating another hunger-strike.

Shall we permit that? Shall we allow them to starve themselves to death when the Congress representing the nation as a whole has made the cause of political prisoners its own?

We shall not. Negotiations have failed. Mass agitation, suspended hitherto, must be renewed with redoubled vigour on a national scale. We must be prepared to force a national crisis if Imperialism proved obdurate.

The issue is not confined to Bengal alone. Comrades Shiv Verma,¹ Jaidev² and Nigam³ of the Lahore Conspiracy Case, Havaladar Major Chandar Singh,⁴ one of the heroes of Garhwal who refused to open fire on the people at Peshawar, Comrade Ram Singh⁵ of the Ajmer Shooting Case and scores of comrades in the Punjab are still being denied freedom.

Comrade Prithwi Singh,⁶ who surrendered to the police a year back and whose release Gandhiji tried to secure, Comrade Gurumukh Singh⁷ the veteran revolutionist, are rotting in the jails of the Punjab.

How long shall this continue? How long shall the Congress allow itself to be treated with impunity?

If at the end of two years of office, and with the great power that it has attained in the country as a whole, the Congress is not able to enforce its demand for release of political prisoners that is solely because our national leaders are afraid of clash, and are not prepared to use the power that we have gained, are not prepared to call up the people to smash the resistance of Imperialism. This intolerable situation must be ended. The cause of political prisoners must be made the cause of the entire nation. The demand for their release must be a national demand. Vigorous agitation must be launched in all parts of the country. The call must go forth from the AICC that meets this month.

Negotiations have failed. The masses must enter the arena. Their strong and sinewy hands alone can unlock the prison gates.

¹ Shiv Verma (1904–97); born in a village in the District of Hardoi (UP); gave up studies to join the Non-Co-operation movement and took an active part in the boycott campaign in 1925; came to Kanpur where he joined the revolutionary movement; met Ram Prasad Bismil (of the Kakori Case) one day before his execution in Gorakhpur Jail, posing as his younger brother, along with Bismil's mother and brought confidential instructions for the Party; one of the very close associates of Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad and others; member of the Central Committee of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) and its chief organizer in UP; in May 1929 he was arrested at Saharanpur Bomb Factory of the HSRA; tried in the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case along with Bhagat Singh and others and sentenced to transportation for life. He lived in Lahore, Madras, Rajamundry and Andaman jails.

² Jaidev Kapoor, born in 1907 at Shahabad, Hardoi district in UP, his father's name was Saligram Kapoor; educated at Kanpur with Shiv Verma and studied Mechanical Engineering at BHU, he joined HRA at the age of 18; met Chandrashekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh. These meetings and those with others soon led to a secret meeting at Ferozeshah

Kotla in Delhi in September 1927 where the HRA was resurrected with a new name, viz, HSRA; Bhagat Singh handed over his pocket watch and shoes to Jaidev Kapoor, when he was going to hurl the bomb in the Assembly; before arrest Jaidev Kapoor remained underground for one year; arrested at Saharanpur in 1929 in connection with the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case, and given life transportation; he was first sent to Rajamundry jail, now in Andhra Pradesh, and from there to the notorious Andaman Cellular Jail. Though a number of revolutionary prisoners were released by 1945, but Shiv Verma, Jaidev Kapoor, Dr Gaya Prasad and Pandit Kishori Lal were not allowed to come out till after independence.

³ Professor N.K. Nigam, born in 1906; educated in Delhi; participated in anti-Rowlatt Bills agitation in Delhi, inspired by revolutions like the French and the Irish etc. Nigam worked as a contact man in the revolutionary group (1923–29); appointed Lecturer of History in Hindu College and superintendent of the College Hostel in 1929; Kailashpati, the leader of Delhi revolutionary group and Chandrashekhar Azad stayed with him in his Hostel in 1929; Chandrashekhar Azad, Yashpal, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and others used to meet in Hindu College Hostel before throwing a bomb at the Viceroy's train near old Fort; arrested and sent to jail in Kanpur on 4 December 1930 in connection with the Second Delhi conspiracy Case; released on 15 August 1934; joined Tata Oils as a salesman and Assistant Manager at Bombay (1935–41); joined Congress in March 1942; he was put in-charge of the Volunteer Corps as well as students activities in Delhi; arrested and sent to prison in August 1942 for two years.

⁴ Chandar Singh Garhwali (1891–1979), born at Ronshera village (Chauthan Patt), district Pauri Garhwal in a farmer's family; educated only upto primary standard, he was attracted towards army and joined Garhwal Rifles in Lansdowne on 3 September 1914, fought in France and Mesopotamia during the first world war; posted in the North West Frontier Province from 1921 to 1923. During the Civil Disobedience movement, he and his fellow soldiers of 2/18 Garhwal Rifles were sent to Peshawar on 23 April 1930, he and his men were ordered by their British Officer to open fire on an agitated Congress rally at the *Kissa Khani Bazar* in Peshawar. Chandar Singh, who stood near Platoon on the left of the Commanding Officer, thunderously countermanded the order: 'Garhwali cease fire'. He told to his Commanding Officer that all these people were unarmed. How could one fire upon unarmed men? On 24 April the British officers asked the Indian officers of Royal Garhwal Rifles to tell their soldiers that they would again be sent on military duty to the town within hours, and that if they declined to obey firing orders, each one of them was to be shot dead on the spot. But the Garhwali soldiers again refused to do so. Then they were asked to put all their arms away in the armoury. The soldiers started shouting, 'we will not surrender our rifles,... we know how to kill and get killed'. Chandar Singh however quietened them and persuaded them to surrender their arms. The disarmed Garhwali soldiers were sent of to Abbottabad. There 67 of them (50 soldiers and 17 of higher ranks) were brought before a Court Martial on 2 June 1930. The verdict was pronounced on 11 June sentencing the prisoners to various terms of imprisonment, with their leaders like Chandar Singh being sentenced for life.

⁵ Ram Singh (1914–75); journalist and revolutionary; arrested in 1930 in the Second Delhi Conspiracy Case; closely associated with the Delhi Congress but parted company on the issue of supporting the British war efforts; involved with M.N. Roy's League of Radical Congressmen; edited *Navayug*, *Vanguard* and *Thought*.

⁶ Baba Prithvi Singh Azad (b. 1892); political career started with the opening of the second decade of the twentieth century; joined the Ghadar Party under the influence of Lala Hardyal in 1911; worked in the Yugantar Ashram, assisting in the publication of the Party paper, the *Ghadar*; returned to India and worked for an armed revolution; implicated in the Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1914–15 and was sentenced to death which was commuted to life imprisonment in the Andaman Islands; after six years' stay there, he was brought back to India. Soon after he escaped from the jail and remained underground for sixteen years till he voluntarily surrendered in 1938 at the insistence of Gandhi. Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* of 30 September 1939: 'He has to his credit examples of daring which may be equalled by some but surpassed by no revolutionary.'

⁷ Baba Gurumukh Singh (b. 1883); born in 1883 in Ludhiana District, Punjab, into a poor peasant family. After visiting California he returned to India in 1914 and was arrested and sentenced in the First Lahore Conspiracy Case; imprisoned in the Andaman Islands, he escaped in 1922 while being transferred to a mainland jail, and made his way to Afghanistan and eventually to the USSR. In 1932, while attempting to return to India, he was arrested by the Afghan government and detained until 1934. After a brief return visit to the USSR, he proceeded to India, in 1935 using a false passport. In India he started a revolutionary newspaper and contacted the CPI. He was again arrested in 1936 and was held in prison in the Andamans and on the mainland until 1946; treasurer of the AIKS for several years, and was generally regarded as an elder statesman among Communists and other revolutionaries.



46. Draft Manifesto of the League of Radical Congressmen: The Object and Programme of the League

Independent India, Vol. 3, No. 16, 16 April 1939; and *Tribune*, 17 April 1939.

16 April 1939

At Tripuri, there was a meeting of delegates and members of the All India Congress Committee who had adopted a consistently revolutionary stand in the historic session of the Congress held there. Many other Congressmen, active in the lower organization throughout the country, also participated in that meeting. The object of the meeting was to discuss the situation created on the one hand, by the triumph of authoritarian leadership and, on the other hand, by the surrender of some leftist groups which largely contributed to that triumph. It was also to devise the ways and means for the organization and coordination of all the revolutionary forces, so that the internal life of the Congress could be democratized and its deviation from the path of an uncompromising struggle against Imperialism could be arrested.

The struggle for national freedom, developing under the banner of the Congress, has attained gigantic proportions. But the tremendous revolutionary potentialities of the force mobilized have not as yet been canalized in the direction of an effective struggle for the attainment of national freedom. This has been due to the confusion of our political objective with other considerations obviously irrelevant to it. Ever since Congressmen were allowed to accept offices in a number of provinces, the perspective of a revolutionary struggle, opened up by previous resolutions, has been clouded by the zeal for introducing measures of superficial reform. The unwarranted belief in the possibility of a gradual transfer of real political power from the foreign rulers to the Indian people has become the underlying motive of all our political activity. For all practical purposes, Congress politics has reverted to the discredited constitutionalist method which was ostensibly rejected nearly twenty years ago. This deplorable deviation from the path of revolutionary mass struggle, the path which alone leads to the professed goal of the Congress, is governed cleverly by a smokescreen of pronouncements and resolutions couched in bombastic phrases which easily delude the uncritical observer and the blind followers.

But the revolutionary urge of the masses mobilized under the banner of the Congress has been expressing itself in a seething discontent with the inadequacy of reformist measures introduced by the Congress Ministries. With all the faith in the magic power of the Mahatma and in the ability of the leaders acting under his direction, those in control of lower Congress organizations can no longer check the growth of rank and file discontent without destroying the internal democracy of the Congress. Enlistment of bogus membership, gross irregularities during elections, high-handed treatment of revolutionary workers, are the practices generally adopted for the purpose. These practices can no longer be denied. They are regarded as evils, which must be eradicated. But remedies suggested from authoritative quarters are bound to be ineffective. The only cure for those evils is democratization of the Congress from, the top to the bottom and activation of its lower units. Political education of the primary membership will be 'the practical application of that cure'. Systematic mass activity, according to a concrete plan, is the school for imparting political education. That is completely absent today. Blind faith being the foundation of the present authoritarian leadership, the necessary process of democratization of the internal life of the Congress is retarded.

Unexpectedly, this year's presidential election made a breach in the vicious circle. Seething rank and file discontent broke out into an elemental revolt against authoritarian leadership. The majority of delegates voted neither for a person nor for Socialism. It was a vote for internal democracy, and even that largely was not a clear vote cast with a consciously revolutionary purpose.

Nevertheless, there was created a situation in which conscious and consistent revolutionaries could and should have taken the initiative with the purpose of laying the foundation for an alternative leadership of the Congress. They had to act with courage and self-confidence. Their motive was not to support one candidate as against another but to oppose the authoritarian leadership which wanted the delegates to vote as they were directed. The majority of the delegates, having asserted their democratic right, it was the duty of revolutionary Congressmen to resist the subsequent efforts of discredited authoritarianism to reestablish itself by exploiting the emotional attachment to the personality of the Mahatma.

Those who had previously pretended to lead the radical elements in the Congress and claimed all the credit for the unexpected result of this year's presidential election, signally failed to perform that duty. They succumbed to the counter-offensive of authoritarianism. The President himself, partly owing to illness, also failed to give a courageous lead to the primitive democratic revolt which could mark the beginning of a line at more far-reaching development.

A small band of conscious and consistent revolutionaries boldly stood up as the vanguard of the democratic forces which are bound to prevail in course at time. They stood up against the counter-offensive of the authoritarian leadership, not with any hope at immediate success, but to keep the standard of revolt flying high. Not concerned with personal ambitions, keeping aloof from opportunist negotiations for some sort of compromise, they raised fundamental political and organizational issues. But deserted by 'Leftists' eager to disown their Leftism, they stood as the forlorn hope of the Indian people's struggle for freedom and its organ, the National Congress. They were not disappointed by the failure of the President to lineup with them even when he was hopelessly isolated, betrayed by those on whom he had staked his political fortune. As conscious and consistent revolutionaries, they had taken up their position deliberately, not to support any individual or to promote the interest of any particular group. Their sole object was to combat the theory and practice of authoritarian leadership which is obstructing the development of India's struggle for freedom.

The forces of democratic revolt, demoralized by the debacle at Tripuri, must be gathered together. They should be encouraged, activized and organized. With that purpose, it has been decided to form a League of Radical Congressmen. The League will stand for the democratization of the Congress from top to bottom. It will undertake the arduous task of laying the foundation for a new revolutionary leadership which is urgently needed for any further development of the struggle for national freedom and social liberation of Indian masses.

The League will have no other programme than the political programme of the Congress. It will press for a clearly formulated plan of systematic action in pursuance of that programme. It will explain the revolutionary implications of the political ideal of the Congress as well as of the resolutions adopted from time to time since the Congress placed that ideal before the country. The League will combat all tendencies of compromise, be it with imperialism or with the conservative sections of the Indian people which have always been allied with Imperialism directly or indirectly. The League will demand rejection of all doctrines and dogmas which encourage those tendencies. Regarding the right of revolt against oppression and tyranny as sacred, the League will oppose the Congress being committed to any principle or policy which may discourage or restrain that revolt. As Congressmen, all members of the League will of course be bound by all the decisions of the Congress and be subject to its discipline. But discipline does not preclude the assertion of democratic right. Therefore, while abiding by these as long as they remain in force, the League will agitate for the revision or amendment of such resolutions of the Congress as, in its opinion, are prejudicial to the development of an uncompromising struggle for the freedom of the Indian masses.

The League will interpret the political programme of the Congress in terms of the Faizpur resolution. By that resolution, the Congress is committed to capture the political power by the Indian people as a condition for the establishment of a genuinely democratic State. The perspective of revolutionary struggle, opened up by that resolution, makes no room for the illusion of a gradual 'transfer of power' which today dominates Congress policy. The League will press for the adoption by the Congress of a comprehensive programme of social reconstruction which must be undertaken by the free democratic State of India to promote the progress and prosperity of the nation. The fundamental feature of that historically necessary reconstruction of Indian society will be the transfer of the ownership of land from the parasitic rent receivers to the cultivators. Another cardinal point in the programme of social reconstruction, which the Congress must adopt, will be rapid industrialization of the country with State aid and under the control of the democratic State. The third important item of the programme will be the abolition of the Indian States simultaneously with the overthrow of Imperialism. Immediately, the League will strive for 1) Eradication of the widespread evil of bogus membership; 2) Activization of the primary members; 3) Creation of a consciously revolutionary, politically trained, active workers attached to each primary Congress Committee; 4) Liberation of Congress Committees from the control of groups or individuals who utilize them for selfish purposes or the interests of their cliques; 5) Establishment of an effective control of the primary membership on the All India Congress Committee and the Provincial Congress Committees; 6) Subordinating ministerial and parliamentary activities to the democratic control of the entire organization to be exercised through the respective Provincial Executives of the Congress. For the attainment of these immediate objects, the League will concentrate its activities on the primary Congress Committees which must become effectively functioning bodies, composed of politically conscious members, and supported by the oppressed and exploited masses of the locality, whose confidence will be won by active participation in a day-to-day struggle for the redress of their immediate grievances. As soon as the basic units of the Congress will be so transformed into living organs of the struggle of the masses, the Congress as a whole will be in the position to take up the final struggle for the capture of power. The primary Congress Committees must be built up as the basic units of the revolutionary democratic state, which must rise within the framework of the established Imperialist State and replace it eventually.

The League will explain to the rank and file of the Congress that the demand for Constituent Assembly has no meaning unless deliberate preparations are forthwith undertaken for the revolutionary mass action necessary for the capture of power. It will further explain that the Congress resolution for resisting the Federal Scheme can be enforced only by enforcing the demand for the Constituent Assembly. The revolutionary implication of this latter demand must be made clear to the Congress rank and file. The League will fearlessly criticize the vulgarization of that demand. It will expose the motive of the vulgarization. It must be understood once for all that the Constituent Assembly can never come into being with the consent of or in agreement with Imperialism. It can be brought about only by the Indian people in revolt. It will rise as the organ for the capture of power by the people; not after the capture of power, as visualized by some who are incapable of conceiving the possibility of the Indian people ever capturing power, and therefore conveniently keep that decisive act out of their mechanical scheme. An organ for the assertion of the right of self-determination can be created only in course of a revolutionary struggle which is the inevitable road to real political power.

Experience having shown that even superficially ameliorative measures cannot be introduced by the Congress Ministries without prejudicing the possibility of carrying on the administration smoothly, all true Congressmen must come to the conclusion that no useful purpose will be served by indefinite continuation of the ministerialist policy. Therefore, the League will advocate

resumption of the policy of wrecking the Provincial as well as the Federal part of the Government of India Act. It will demand creation of constitutional crisis in the provinces by Congressmen in office and in legislature pressing for (1) Substantial (at least fifty per cent) reduction of rent; (2) Liquidation of all rural indebtedness wherever double the money of original rent has been paid up; (3) Eight hours day for industrial and clerical workers without reduction of wages, and the fixation of the minimum scale of pay; (4) Unemployment relief; (5) Immediate repeal of all laws made for suppressing the liberty of the Indian people particularly the sections of the Indian Penal Code dealing with the so-called offences against the State.

The League will advocate that on any one of these issues Congress Ministries should resign as soon as any effort will be made for introducing the Federal Scheme. Since resignations of the Provincial Ministries alone will not prevent the imposition of the Federation, the constitutional crisis should be utilized for precipitating a general political crisis which will create the condition wherein the decisive struggle for the capture of power will be undertaken. The activities of the League will have in the meantime transformed the primary Congress Committees into powerful democratic bodies capable of beginning to function as the basic units of a revolutionary State.

The League will stand for national unity, but it will be the unity of the masses oppressed and exploited by Imperialism. Therefore, the League will give special attention to the question of Hindu-Muslim unity. One of the main objectives will be to bring the Muslim, Non-Brahmin and the so called depressed class masses into the Congress and thereby make it rallying ground of the united anti-imperialist forces. With this purpose the League will advocate measures necessary for removing the doubts and distrust which have been created among the Muslim masses and minority communities by the mischievous propaganda of interested parties. The League will persuade the Congress to accept the demand for separate electorates for the minorities and their proportional representation in public service, as long as a better method cannot be evolved with the consent of the communities concerned. This and other guarantees for the protection of minorities shall be incorporated in the Constitution of the Government of Free India to be framed by the Constituent Assembly.

The League will vigorously combat provincialism as well as communalism. All radical Congressmen must be alarmed by the possibility of Bengal politics degenerating into provincialism in consequence of the present crisis in the Congress, as had happened in the Maharashtrian Provinces after the Khare episode. The League's revolutionary fight against authoritarianism does not count on provincial jealousies. The purpose of the League will not be served by pandering to such a narrow outlook. Determined to strengthen the Congress as the national organization, the League can never encourage provincialism which, just as communalism, is prejudicial to national unity and popular power.

We believe that the object of the League and its plan of action will commend themselves to all Congressmen who sincerely stand for democracy, freedom and progress. We propose to do no more or no less than should be done by the Congress as a whole in pursuance of its ideal and programme. But unfortunately that is not done at present. Hence the necessity of an organization for guiding and co-ordinating the activity of the revolutionary and radical elements in the Congress, who though constituting its majority are today practically excluded from its leadership. Yet, those elements must come to their own, must assert their democratic right, must influence the policy of the Congress, and must determine its outlook, if the Congress is ever to lead the Indian people in the struggle for political freedom and social liberation. Let them be organized with that object. The concrete form to the organization will be given by our experience. Meanwhile let us be united with the common revolutionary purpose of building up the Congress as a powerful party of the Indian people which, under a consciously revolutionary leadership, will be able to plan, fight

and win successive battles against Imperialism, and for the accomplishment of the Democratic National Revolution.

47. The CP Socialists and Tripuri Congress

These are extracts from a resolution adopted by the Executive Committee of the CP and Berar Provincial Congress Socialist Party regarding the Congress Socialist stand at Tripuri, *Independent India*, 16 April 1939.

16 April 1939

This Committee is definitely of the opinion that the policy enunciated and followed by the CSP [Congress Socialist Party] leadership subsequent to the re-election of Subhas Chandra Bose to the Congress presidency was one of hesitation, suspicion and want of determination. As a natural result of this weak and indecisive policy the CSP failed to play its proper role. The Committee is of the opinion that the final act of remaining neutral on the Pant Resolution was, by itself, a negation of its basic principles and policy. It has dealt a severe blow to the growing solidarity of the radical and socialist elements in the Congress.

The Committee feels that the cause of democracy within the Congress movement has suffered a serious setback and authoritarian tendencies in the Congress movement has profited by this policy of neutrality taken up by the CSP at Tripuri on the Pant Resolution.

It is the considered opinion of this Committee that the CSP as a whole should have stood firm by the democratic verdict of the delegates in favour of Subhas Chandra Bose in the matter of Presidential election and that the party leaders should not have allowed themselves to be utilized by the Gandhian group in their efforts to negate the democratic principles. The Committee is further of the opinion that the CSP could and should have utilized the election of Subhas Bose for furthering the party policy, programme, and principles. This inexplicably strange attitude taken up by the Party leaders at Tripuri has been responsible for the widespread belief that the CSP leadership was a party to the intrigue to humiliate and dethrone the President-elect at any cost. The Committee believes that the prestige of the Party cannot be rehabilitated in the country and further, the CSP cannot continue to remain as the focal point of attraction and inspiration for all the left forces in the Congress and the country unless and until the CSP clears up its position and even at this late stage takes up an attitude consistent with the fundamental principles and policy followed by it prior to Tripuri. The precedent set up at Tripuri of dishonouring and humiliating the President of the Indian National Congress has dealt a severe blow to the democratic traditions of the Congress and cleared the way for reactionary authoritarianism to be firmly entrenched into it. That the CSP instead of resisting such a move made by the rightists should have helped it to succeed by a policy of neutrality is a tragedy too sad to describe.

The Committee feels that the discomfiture and humiliation of the radical forces and the triumph of the ministerialists at Tripuri has accelerated the feeling of disappointment and despair generated among the masses as a result of the policy of drift to constitutionalism and reformism pursued by Congress in offices and communalists and other reactionary elements are profiting through this.

48. The Tripuri Congress: Role of the Communists, 'Our Stand at Tripuri' by A.K. Ghosh

National Front, 16 April 1939.

The stand taken by us at Tripuri has been subjected to sharp criticism by a section of the Left. It is alleged that we capitulated completely before the offensive of the Right wing, accepted the Gandhian

ideology and leadership, deserted Subhas and, on the whole, betrayed woeful lack of firmness. Further that at Tripuri we forgot all the slogans that we had been popularizing for the last one year.

Are these criticisms correct? If so, to what extent?

We were the first to give the call for President Bose's re-election. That was in October 1938. The AICC meeting was over. The war crisis in the midst of which it met, brought out sharply all our weaknesses and our unpreparedness to meet any contingency. Even in such a situation, when war clouds were thundering above our very heads our leaders had not hesitated to bring forward the disruptive civil liberties resolution. Disruptions were threatening the Congress. The policy of drift followed as the top had bred discontent at the base.

Another war crisis was maturing. Desperate efforts were being made by imperialism to hasten the advent of Federation. Yet there was no sign that our national leaders were conscious of the seriousness of the situation. It was in this situation that we gave the call for Sjt Bose's re-election. We wrote:

In these critical times, the head of our people, the President of the Congress must not only be able to hold the people together but keep them in trim to come to grips with the national enemy.... Against British Imperialism which seeks to impose the Federation, Bose is our strong anti-Federation President. At a time when the greatest need of our movement is national unity but when a section of our leadership is threatening Civil War within the Congress he is the living link uniting the two wings of the movement.

National Front, 16 October 1938.

We knew that the policy of drift was leading to disruption. If that policy was continued a stage would come when the Congress would become powerless to resist any major offensive of imperialism—even the imposition of the Federal Scheme. Bose stood for struggle, for unity in the Congress, for unity between Congress and the workers and peasants organizations, for active support to the States People's movement. Moreover he like Nehru, could maintain the unity of the Congress—a unity that was essential for the success of the struggle that loomed ahead.

Hence we advocated his re-election.

'Unity and struggle, unity for struggle, struggle through unity' were thus our slogans, right from the beginning. That our slogans were correct, that they are correct even today, that struggle was possible only by uniting the Congress and that the forces of disruption could be defeated only by ending the policy of drift and taking a forward step, have been conclusively proved by the developments of the last few months.

Congress and Federation

But what was the forward step that we wanted the Congress to take, for months we had been writing that a purely defensive attitude with regard to Federation was not enough. To merely declare that if and when Federation is imposed, the Congress would resist it means firstly, abandoning the struggle against the Slave Constitution as a whole and secondly, leaving the initiative to Imperialism. On 8th January President Bose in the course of a statement said, 'Supposing the British Government decided to postpone the inauguration of the Federation for five or ten years, shall we sit down with folded hands and play a purely defensive role? I think we all agree that we can not do so.'

'We want Purna Swaraj. It is in our hands to create the atmosphere in which the next Congress gives the marching order.'

We acclaimed the statement. President Bose had posed the central political issue sharply. Shall we wait for the Federation or shall we march forward? In whose hands shall the initiative rest—Imperialism or the Congress?

There could be only one answer to this question, the Congress must seize the initiative and launch the offensive against the entire Slave Constitution. The national forces had grown so powerful; the international situation had grown so critical that there was every possibility of our achieving independence in the immediate future if the nation could be united for the forward move.

The Plan of Action

This forward move was possible only on the basis of the broadest national unity. We supported the following plan of action and sought to achieve unity on its basis:

(1) Ultimatum to the British Government demanding independence within a specified period. In case of non-fulfilment of the demand nation-wide struggle was to be launched.

(2) The intervening period was to be used for preparing for the struggle. This was to be done by rapid implementing of the Congress Election programme by the Ministries, by establishing united front relations between the Congress and the workers and peasants organizations, by the Congress itself taking up and leading the States people's movement, by establishing communal unity, and by creating a National Volunteer Corps. We popularized the above plan of action and called upon the people to vote for Subhas Bose in order to ensure its being adopted and implemented by the Congress.

Bose's Re-election—A Wrong Evaluation

The Socialist comrades, who at first were not very enthusiastic about the Presidential contest, later supported Subhas wholeheartedly. So did the Royists and the entire Left.

It was after Bose's re-election that the differences among the Left came to the surface and the most grievous mistakes were made by certain sections of the Left. They entirely failed to read the real significance of the election. They thought that the time had come for 'an alternative leadership', for at least demanding a majority for Leftists in the Congress Working Committee. Bose's victory was interpreted by them as defeat of Gandhism and Gandhian leadership and technique. They raised slogans of new programme, new leadership, new ideology. The utmost length to which they would go was expressed by the following formula: 'We do not want to drive all Rightists out of the Working Committee. But we want them to co-operate with us on our own terms.'

To these sections the resignation of the 12 members of the Working Committee appeared to be a blessing in disguise. The path was clear for a homogeneous Left Committee, for the 'new revolutionary leadership'.

On the contrary, we viewed President Bose's re-election in an entirely different manner and therefore, set entirely different tasks before ourselves.

'By voting for Subhas Bose, the delegates have recorded their verdict for a policy of advance, for passing on to the offensive....

'The need for the hours is to unite the entire Congress for the offensive not merely against the Federation but.... against the entire Government of India act.... United struggle under a united national leadership is the surest guarantee for the victory of the struggle. All slogans and tactics therefore that tend to widen and perpetuate the existing division between the Right and the Left... that demand the ousting of the Right wingers from their position of leadership in the Congress must be considered disruptive.'

Editorial, *National Front*, 26 February.

We went to Tripuri therefore with the slogans of united leadership and forward move—slogans which we had been popularizing all through the year.

Our Slogan—No Side-tracking

We knew that attempts would be made to side-track the main issue, that questions of fundamental principles and ideology would be raised. We therefore, warned every one not to fall in to the trap, but to concentrate attention on political and organizational issues.

‘Consciously or unconsciously the main issue is being side-tracked. Incompatibility of diverse ideologies is being made the justification for the crisis by those responsible for it. Adherence to the creed of non-violence and faith in the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi are being made the defence for what amounts to revolt against the Congress.

‘... The main issue must not be side-tracked. What the nation by electing Subhas Bose had demanded is not a new leadership, not a homogeneous cabinet, not a new ideology, not even a new programme. The demand is for a policy of advance instead of the present policy of drift....’ That the main issue was side-tracked, that questions of fundamental principles and ideology were raised, that the leadership of Gandhiji was posed against that of Bose, and that as a result Tripuri failed to become a session of unity and struggle, were due to factors over which neither Socialists nor Communists had control. It was Rashtrapati Bose’s failure to forestall the Pant resolution by a statement, that gave the Right wing leaders the opportunity. He himself was seriously ill and therefore perhaps could not judge what disastrous repercussions this failure would have on the whole session’.

But it is in an open secret that the advocates of ‘alternative leadership’ theory and a number of pseudo Left leaders who for their own personal aggrandizement were opposed to the restoration of unity, strongly opposed the advice given to Bose by Socialists and Communists. To Roy and some ‘Leftists’ this admission will seem to be another evidence of our ‘vacillatory policy’. But we had gone to Tripuri not in order to reduce the Congress session into a battleground between the Right and the Left over ideological and personal issues but to bring to the forefront the political and organizational tasks facing the nation. We knew that the Pant resolution would side-track the main issue, would focus attention on non-essentials, would frustrate our efforts for politicalizing the session. Hence we had tried to get it forestalled by a statement from President Bose himself declaring his complete confidence in the integrity of the members of the Working Committee and making a fervent appeal for unity. That would have deprived the Right wingers of the weapon which they used with such devastating effect at the session.

What should have been our attitude towards the resolution? We had already interpreted Subhas Bose’s election as ‘demand not for a new leadership; not for a new ideology not even for a new programme but for a policy of advance instead of the policy of drift.’ We therefore deliberately decided not to be drawn into controversy over ideological issues, not to deny Gandhiji’s undoubted leadership of the nation but to oppose only those clauses of the resolution which sought to indirectly censure Bose and which could be used by the Right wing to re-establish its exclusive leadership and continue the old policy both politically and organizationally. (The ‘aspersion’ clause and the clause demanding the appointment of the Working Committee in accordance with ‘Gandhiji’s wishes’.)

Our opposition to the Pant resolution was therefore not ideological or personal but political. It was dictated by needs of immediate struggle and of united leadership. That we together with the CSP succeeded in mobilizing 125 votes in the AICC against the resolution itself shows the correctness of our stand.

The Rowdyism and its Effect

After the rowdy demonstration in the open session and Sarat Bose’s opportunist speech, the opinion of rank and file delegates swung overwhelmingly against the President. Sarat Babu was supposed

to be the accredited representative of the President. The ultimatum resolution which was known to everybody as Subhas Bose's policy was interpreted by him in a speech which shocked even the Right wingers. The sum and substance of his 'plan of action' was threat of struggle and ministerial resignation to back up the threat if imperialism did not yield. The masses nowhere came into the picture, mass struggle—even of the peaceful satyagraha variety—was not even mentioned by him. And it was on the basis of this policy that he ridiculed the National Demand resolution and voted against it.

Neutrality or Opposition?

We had opposed the Pant resolution because it was descriptive, because it sought to impose restrictions on a President who advocated a policy of struggle. But the past few days' development clearly showed that forces of disruption were at work in the Left camp too, that one of the closest associates of the President and one who must have collaborated with him in evolving the ultimatum resolution advocated a line which was thoroughly opportunist and reformist. It was under the influence of these elements of disruption and opportunism that the President had rejected our advice for issuing a statement. This had objectively helped the disruptors in the camp of the Right. Disruptors in the camps of the Right and the Left had frustrated our efforts to restore unity. The President himself had failed to check them, had failed to act as the 'live link between the two wings of the national movement'—a role which we expected him to play when we advocated his re-election—had failed to take the steps that alone could politicalize the session.

Could we, consistent with loyalty to the Congress and our advocacy of the policy of unity maintain the same attitude towards the Pant resolution as before? Would not our opposition to the resolution mean our support to the Left disruptors?

In view of these considerations, the Executive leadership of the Communists decided in favour of neutrality. That was half an hour before the session.

The decision was changed not because of the threat of rank and file revolt but by the political leadership of the Communists before the session actually commenced. Today, all of us, including those who were in favour of neutrality recognize that the decision to oppose the resolution was right and neutrality would have been wrong.

Why Opposition was Right

What our Executive leadership had failed to see was that the change of front would produce tremendous confusion and would split the Left itself without whose unity the National Front could not be forged. What was obvious to us who were in intimate touch with all the developments was not clear to the Left delegation as a whole. The surest way to hand over the honest Leftists to Left disruptors was for the Socialists and Communists to isolate themselves from other Leftists at this juncture. Politically too neutrality would be wrong, for notwithstanding all that had happened the resolution remained disruptive in character and opposition to it was the only correct course to follow.

Our Political Resolution

The forward policy which we wanted the Congress to adopt was embodied in a draft resolution that was given notice of by Comrades Bharadwaj, Sardesai and others.

National Front, Vol. 2, No. 4–5.

The resolution (1) reiterated our objective (2) pointed out the limitations of Provincial Autonomy (3) recognized the great awakening among all sections of our people and (4) declared that in view

of the favourable world situation and the great strength that the popular forces had attained, the time had come to launch struggle against the Slave Constitution as a whole. The Congress should demand of British imperialism the fulfilment of the national demand for independence; in case of non-acceptance of the same within six months, the situation should be reviewed by the Working Committee and necessary steps taken to enforce them. Finally with the object of preparing for nation-wide struggle, the resolution formulated a concrete Plan of Action.

The Slogan of Ultimatum

For 2 months before the session we had been trying to popularize the slogan of ultimatum. An ultimatum however can be delivered only by a united Congress. A resolution embodying the slogan of ultimatum is not just an ordinary resolution whose being carried or not carried is a matter of little importance. Such a resolution, if defeated by a big majority would make it appear to both imperialism and the people that only an insignificant majority in the Congress wants struggle in the immediate future—an entirely wrong impression in view of the result of the Presidential election and other developments. If the entire Congress or at least the entire Left and a big section of the centre favoured the ultimatum, then and then only could it be embodied in the major political resolution of the session—a resolution which we wanted to be the basis of national unity.

What we found at Tripuri was that we had failed to popularize the ultimatum slogan extensively, that not even the entire Left could be united on its basis. The slogan of ultimatum in such a case, if insisted upon, would have become a slogan of disruption and not unity. We therefore agreed to delete the ultimatum clause from our resolution and prepared a draft resolution (along with the CSP) which embodied all the points of our resolution except the ultimatum clause. The Left nationalists too agreed to support the resolution. We wanted this draft to be accepted by the President and given priority over other resolutions. That could have been done because there were no 'Official' resolutions in this session.

If that resolution had come before the session in the manner we wanted, Tripuri would have recorded a tremendous advance. The Right wing leaders could not have moved amendments to it without completely exposing themselves. Could they, for instance, have moved amendments deleting the clause demanding closer united front relations between the Congress and workers and peasants' organizations? Could they have opposed the creation of a National Volunteer Corps?

The National Demand Resolution

But once again we failed. Because of the serious illness of the President, it was not possible for us to discuss with him the resolution and stress the need for his giving it the priority. His Left nationalist supporters, while they agreed to support the resolution, did not realize the need either. What came before the Subjects Committee was the National Demand resolution of Jawaharlal. It contained all the points in our preamble but embodied no Plan of Action, nor did it emphasize that the policy of drift must be ended and all-round offensive launched.

Our Amendment

The proper thing for Socialists and Communists to do was to move amendments to the resolution remedying these defects. The following amendments were moved for being added at the end of the resolution:

'As an essential part of this preparation, the Congress further emphasizes the need for eliminating the disruptive forces that are at work in the country such as communal conflicts, for encouraging closer contact with the movements and organizations of peasants and workers, for laying more

stress on social legislation and civil liberties and in its parliamentary activities, for co-ordinating and developing the struggles of the States' people as an integral part of the national movement under Congress guidance and for the organization of a National Volunteer Corps.

'The Congress is confident that if the policy and Plan of Action set out above is carried, by the time it meets again, a fit situation will have been created for launching a nation-wide struggle against imperialist domination and for enforcement of the demand for national independence.'

Jawaharlal accepted part of the amendment and incorporated it in the resolution. After this Comrade Meherally who had moved the amendment (agreed to by the Socialists and Communists) withdrew it even without consulting our comrades of the AICC.

Our Mistake

It was here that we made the first major mistake. While it is true that the session was practically at an end, the delegates were fagged out and there was no possibility of the full amendment being accepted in such an atmosphere it was nevertheless our duty to have insisted on the amendment and moved it in the Open Session. That would not have changed the resolution, but at least we would have been able to clarify our position, use the Congress platform to popularize the Plan of Action and explain as to why we agreed to drop the ultimatum clause.

This failure was serious; ordinarily one would have considered it, and rightly too, as surrender. But in this particular case, it was not so. An atmosphere of unreality pervaded the Subjects Committee meeting on the last 2 days. Serious discussion was no longer possible. The Pant resolution was still to come before the Open Session. Would it be passed? If so, would the President resign? Such were the thoughts uppermost in every mind. It had become simply impossible to direct attention to other issues.

The Basic Cause of Failure

Nonetheless the result of the failure was not as serious as some comrades seem to think. There was no likelihood of the amendment being accepted. Our moving the amendment would only have enabled us to popularize our plan of action from the Congress platform. And that was done by Comrade Jayaprakash in his speech. Explaining the significance of the resolution, he pointed out what 'preparation for nation-wide offensive means.' He stressed the need for rapid implementing of the Election programme, for establishment of complete unity between Congress and workers and peasants organizations, for placing the Congress organizations on a fighting basis. To a great extent therefore the mistake was rectified.

What our critics forget is that at Tripuri we were faced with an extraordinary situation. We were fully alive to the dangers. Forces of disruption were at work. We sounded notes of warning. They were not heeded by all. The President was the one person who could have changed the whole character of the session, raised it above petty squabbles and made it one of the most glorious sessions of the Congress. Due to his serious illness, it was not possible to influence him. Once the initiative had passed into the hands of the Right, once they succeeded in side-tracking, the issues, the rest logically followed. The Left was out-manoeuvred.

At no session of the Congress had the Left succeeded in achieving so much unity as at Tripuri. Yet, at Tripuri itself, fissures developed in the Left camp and after Tripuri the conflict within the Left camp has sharpened. One section of the Left blames another for the debacle. And today the Left seems in a state of chaos and disintegration.

What explains this paradox?

Lessons of Tripuri

The Left had undoubtedly secured a great deal of unity. But this unity was not adequate in view of the stupendous nature of the tasks facing the Left. In every other Congress session the Left played merely an oppositional role. Here, for the first time, an occasion had come when the Left had got its nominee elected to the position of President of the Congress. This very augmentation of strength demanded that the Left had to play, more than ever before, the role of unifier. How this role should be played, what should be the basic slogans—on these matters there was no unanimity, in the camp of the Left. A Left Working Committee or United Working Committee alternative leadership or united leadership, alternative ideology and programme or only a forward move—on these issues, which had become of burning importance after the Presidential election, the Left could not achieve internal unity. Far greater political and tactical unity in the Left camp was needed than what existed, in order to tackle the new problems that faced us. This unity was not achieved. Hence two different approaches were manifest even when the various sections of the Left formally ‘united’ on the basis of some amendments and slogans.

Our task today is to repair the damage, to restore unity in the Left camp. Without Left unity national unity cannot be built. But what would be the slogans of the Left?

What would be the political basis of Left Unity?

It is on this point that utmost confusion prevails. Let it be clearly understood that the slogans of the Left today must be such as can be made the slogans of the entire Congress, as can be the basis of unity of the Congress as a whole, as can give expression to the urge of the millions of Congressmen who want struggle but who also have confidence in the existing leadership. In the measure the Left gives expression to this urge, in the measure it combines the slogan of struggle with that of unity, in that measure it will win the confidence of the masses of Congressmen and be able to play a more and more decisive role in shaping Congress policy. In the measure the Left fails to take note of this urge and either surrenders to the Right or advocates slogans which create disunity—in that measure it will isolate and weaken itself.

That is the lesson of Tripuri.

49. Radical Youths’ Association

Extracts from the Bombay Province Weekly Letter No. 16, 22 April 1939, Home Department (Special), File No. 895, Part 3, 1938–40, Maharashtra State Archives.

Socialist and Communist Activities

At a meeting of the Radical Youths’ Association held at Ahmedabad on the 16th April, it was decided to form a branch of an All-India League of Radicals with the object of stemming the present drift towards constitutionalism. At the same meeting it was arranged that members of the Executive Committee should devote themselves to the establishment and capture by the radicals of Village Congress Committees.

Communists, Socialists, etc.

At an extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee of the Gujarat Radical Youths’ Association held at Ahmedabad on 18th February, the following resolutions are reported to have been passed: (1) protesting against the arrest of A.T. Shaikh¹, (2) requesting the Bengal Government to release him. (3) asking the rank and file of the Congress to mobilize countrywide agitation for the release of Shaikh, (4) condemning the action of Kapil M. Dave (in helping the Police to arrest Shaikh), (5) condemning the vilifying report published by the *Gujarat Samachar* about Shaikh.

A procession of about 100 persons led by Hariprasad C. Bhatt, Jayaman Dave and Bhalchandra N. Almoula moved through principal thoroughfares of the city shouting slogans such as 'Release Tayab Shaikh'.

At a general meeting of the members of the Congress Socialists party held on 21st February, the following resolutions are reported to have been passed: (1) stressing the need for organized leftist action in the Congress in view of the situation created by the presidential election, (2) disowning the intention to disrupt Congress unity, (3) deprecating the lethargic and indifferent policy of the Congress with regard to the agitation in the States and urging the necessity of direct action, (4) condemning the arrest of A.T. Shaikh.

¹ Tayab Ali Shaikh was among those new recruits of M.N. Roy in Berlin, who brought Roy's 'Manifesto to the Revolutionary Vanguard of the Toiling Masses of India' in 1930, and prepared ground for Roy's arrival in India; arranged for Roy's temporary hideout in Bombay; Secretary of the Hindustan Association of Central Europe in 1930; organizer of the Royist group in Bombay and Calcutta; his relations with the Bombay 'Royists' deteriorated in the late 1930s as he came to be replaced by V.B. Karnik as Roy's right-hand man; attended the Karachi Session of Congress in 1931 and moved and seconded M.N. Roy's amendments in the resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru; Secretary of the Unity Committee in June 1931; elected Secretary of the AITUC in July, 1931; Published M.N. Roy's biography under the pen-name 'A.K. Hindi', *M.N. Roy; The Man who Looked Ahead*, from Ahmedabad in early 1938.

50. Royism Exposed: Inverted Rightism

Article by G. Adhikari,¹ *National Front*, 23 April 1939.

23 April 1939

At Chittagong Roy has declared a war to the knife against the Communists and Socialists. He announces that the historic hour of the final collapse of the Communists and Socialists has come. 'They have let down the flag of revolution, and with a misconceived notion of national unity, capitulated abjectly before the flaunting banner of victorious reaction.' It is now left to Roy and his heroic handfuls to pick up the Red flag of revolution which the Communists have soiled and to assume the leadership of the Left that remains and to proceed to establish the alternative leadership in the Congress. For, has not the 'National Front' Group which calls itself Communist accepted Gandhism as a revolutionary policy and declared the authoritarian leadership of the Patel Group as indispensable for the anti-imperialist struggle? Has it not swung from its erstwhile 'Ultra leftism' to 'abject capitulation before the offensive of counter-revolution?' Has it not been seriously clamouring for 'a marching order' to 'Gandhijee's little hut?' Socialism and Communism has been betrayed. Revolutionary Nationalism has been betrayed. M.N. Roy alone stands like Casablanca on the burning deck of the Left whence all but he have fled!

The Indictment!

Shorn of their distortions and exaggeration, what do Roy's charges against the Communists at Tripuri amount to? The Communists stood and strove for a united leadership, for an immediate nationwide offensive against imperialism. They refused to join in intrigues and organizational *coup d'état* for capturing the Working Committee. They refused to make the Pant resolution the occasion for a frontal ideological attack on Gandhism and Gandhian leadership. They recognized that the resolution was a clever ruse to sidetrack the main issue of unity of leadership for the impending struggle. They therefore attacked it as a disruptive move, as an effort to establish the organizational as well as the political status quo by the backdoor.

We Plead Guilty!

We unreservedly plead guilty to these charges. We consciously followed this line. We have explained and defended it in several articles before and after Tripuri. It was not a line of capitulation. It was the only possible line of advance and of the unity of the anti-imperialist forces under the circumstances. We maintain that had the Communists and Socialists succeeded in the implementing the line unitedly and without deviations either to the Right (neutrality of the CSP) or to the Left (attitude of some Communists) and had the President taken a more political and less personal view of the situation, we would have certainly avoided the landslide in favour of the Right and the moral setback, in spite of the ultra-leftist antics of Com. Roy. In this article, therefore, we will confine ourselves to a critical examination of the alternative line proposed by Roy and prove its disruptive character.

Alternative Leadership

The starting point of our differences with Com. Roy, on the issues at Tripuri was the interpretation of the success of the presidential election. Was it the signal for revolt against the 'authoritarian and compromising leadership?' Had the Left now to pass over to the line of conducting an immediate struggle for 'freeing the Congress from the domination of these elements'? Or was the success of Subhas to be interpreted as a rank and file vote for struggle against the undemocratic and authoritarian tendencies of the present leadership, but not yet for its elimination? For Roy the presidential election had created a new situation. 'The conscious and consistent revolutionaries had now to take the initiative with the purpose of laying the foundation of an alternative leadership of the Congress' (Manifesto of the Radical Congressmen's League).

Why We Reject It

Why did we reject the slogan of alternative leadership as a disruptive slogan from the very start? Were we blind to the growing dissatisfaction with the undemocratic tendencies of the leadership? Had we suddenly grown oblivious of the existence of the capitulatory policy—a policy of drift in respect of the fight against the constitution, against the federation, which was being followed by the Working Committee? Had we overnight discovered the revolutionary merits of Gandhism? Nothing of the sort. The acceptance of the slogan of 'alternative leadership' would have meant the rejection of the basic policy of the United National Front which was accepted and was being followed by the entire Left for the last 3 years. Thus the test to be applied to judge the correctness or otherwise of the Royist slogan is a fundamental one. Have events in the last 18 months culminating in the election of Sjt Subhas Bose so completely changed the class relations within our National Movement as to knock out the bottom of the policy of United National Front? This is the basic question which has to be raised and answered.

Tripuri Again

But before we go to the fundamentals let us make one more point about the significance of the presidential vote. The delegates had voted for struggle. They had voted against the policy of drift with regard to the federation, against the unsatisfactory work of the Ministries in widening civil liberties, in implementing the election manifesto, and against the conciliatory policy with regard to the States, etc. They had not voted for the removal of the leadership.

The dissatisfaction with the policy followed by the leadership had not reached a stage when the leadership was isolated and its replacement was demanded. The Right wing leadership was keenly alive to this feature of the situation. That is why it raised the slogan of 'homogeneous cabinet.' When Gandhijee stated that Subhas's victory was his defeat, when he advised him to

form his Left Working Committee, he was raising the issue of leadership to cloud and side-track the political issue of a forward move. He knows the weakness of the majority which had voted for Subhas. It was bound to collapse when the question of change of leadership would be sharply posed. On straight political issues this majority had a greater chance of standing intact and thus forcing the leadership to move, to accommodate the new trends. A straight line connects the three points: Gandhiji's statement, resignations, and the Pant resolution. It was a line of side-tracking the main political issue by playing upon the loyalty which the majority of the Congress delegates had to the existing leadership, of splitting the political unity of the majority. The aim was the re-establishment of the *status quo* which was rudely shaken by the election. The Royist tactics objectively facilitated the same result. Had the slogan of Left-leadership been advocated by Socialists and Communists together with Roy, the result would have been a far more complete victory of the Right and a squeezing out of the Left. The level of political consciousness reached by the masses also did not correspond to raising the slogan of 'overthrow the present leadership.' That is why the Right wingers preferred to fight on the issue of a change of leadership rather than on the political issue of a forward move against imperialism.

Role of the Bourgeoisie

Acceptance of the theory of alternative leadership is tantamount to the rejecting of the line of the United National Front. To demand the elimination of the present leadership (Gandhian) is to demand the expulsion of a whole class from the National Front. That class is the Nationalist bourgeoisie and its followers. This class is today a part of that front which stands face to face with imperialism demanding independence and democracy and committed to the policy of launching a mass movement for these demands. While its interests are opposed to that of imperialism, they also conflict with those of the masses—peasants, workers and employees. This accounts for the vacillating and ambiguous position it occupies in the National struggle. But imperialism is not yet overthrown. The class of capitalists and traders is together with the rest of the Indian people—an oppressed class. Its nationally-minded section supported the Congress. We do not expect it to play a revolutionary role, that is, supply a consistently revolutionary leadership to the national struggle against imperialism and feudalism. But it has also not joined the camp of the counter-revolution, as yet has not become 'a junior partner' in the imperialist firm.

New Situation

During the last years—that is, after 1934—a new situation has been maturing in India and in the world. In India a new upsurge of mass struggles of workers and peasants—a new wave of radicalization of the Congress rank and file—an emergence of the Socialist wing inside the Congress has taken place. The unification and growth of the Trade Union movement—growth of the political activity of the working class—the rise of the AIKS leading and organizing the mighty Kisan upsurge and finally the rise of the States people's struggles. These are the salient features of the new situation in India. The world situation on the other hand has steadily deteriorated since the great crisis of 1929. Crisis was followed by depression—depression by partial recovery which has once again given way to a new crisis. The political counterpart of this crisis has been fascism—development of fascist aggression upsetting the old post-war equilibrium of imperialist conflicts and the beginning of the second imperialist war. This has created a position in which British imperialism has to unfold greater aggression against the colonies and against the Indian people as a whole. In this period the conflicts between the British bourgeoisie and the Indian capitalists grow sharper and a junior partnership becomes less possible. On the other hand imperialism urgently needs peace in the Indian Empire. In view of the impending war menace this is vital for them. It is these conditions

which make a United National Front possible for an immediate advance against imperialism—against the constitution for a new decisive victory over imperialism.

Raison d'être of UNF

Does this perspective imply that the National bourgeoisie has become revolutionary? Does it mean that its vacillations, its tendency to capitulate, to sacrifice the larger interests of the people—of independence, and democracy, for the end of feudal exploitation—in favour of its own narrow class interests are finally overcome? Not in the least. What is important is that it is possible to overcome its vacillations, to push the leadership forward towards struggle. It is a fact that the constitutional tendency has grown in the sphere of the Congress Ministries. It is a fact that conciliatory moves in the sphere of the States' people's struggle have a vital bearing on the possibility of a compromise. But side by side with this the forces of the extra-parliamentary struggle of the Kisans and industrial workers have grown, so have the revolts of the people of the States against obsolete forms of political and economic exploitation. The opinion in favour of a forward move, for a decisive struggle is growing. It is registered in the Tripuri resolution on the National Demand. The die is heavily loaded against the compromising tendency. In the measure the partial struggles of the Kisans and workers in the States as well as in the British provinces grow, in the degree the Congress units get more and more linked up with these developing struggles, in the measure the working class is able to act politically, in that measure the balance in the united leadership of the National Front shifts towards a consistent revolutionary democratic leadership.

Meaningless Jargon of an Experienced Marxist

Even the compromisers in the United National Front today want to preserve unity. Without preserving the unity of the Congress and the National movement no pressure against imperialism would be possible. It is therefore possible for the working class, for the Left, to preserve unity for struggle by continually keeping the initiative in their hands, to broaden the base of the existing partial struggles and use them to build the Congress units as organs of the people's will to fight. Roy makes fun of 'the doctrine of all-embracing national unity'. He calls for 'unity of the forces of revolution'. And for this he wants first the overthrow of the existing leadership. How does he propose to achieve it—'by a systematic criticism of Gandhist ideology'. He ridicules the role of the independent class organization of workers and peasants in developing the national struggle. Kisan Sabhas, of course, are a taboo. The working class and its Party has hardly any role to play in his scheme of things. All this is 'meaningless jargon' to him, 'an experienced Marxist'. We are charged of making 'schemes which are delightfully vague'. What is his definite and concrete scheme? His first step is in some mysterious way to 'blast the present reactionary leadership'. Then this alternative leadership proceeds to re-organize the Congress as a revolutionary people's party. Then the requisite conditions for the revolutionary struggle for power—for the transformation of the Congress from an organ of struggle into an organ of state power are said to have matured!

'De-Colonization'

Roy is not propounding the theory of alternative leadership for the first time. It runs through all his writings since 1930. But it has nothing in common with a Marxist class analysis. The essence of this so-called theory is this: The National bourgeoisie in India is already 'de-colonized', that is, has become a junior partner in the imperialist firm of colonial exploitation. It is counter revolutionary. 'Its aspirations are satisfied at least partially under the new constitution'. The present leadership of the Congress is petty bourgeois under the influence of the feudal-reactionary ideology of Gandhism. This petty bourgeois leadership is to be replaced by another, representing the revolutionary

democratic urge of the people. The whole process of the change of leadership is not viewed as a process—as a shift in the relationship of class forces—a shift towards the hegemony of the proletariat brought about through the pressure of the growing struggle of the worker and peasant masses. It is visualized as a mechanical change achieved by a agitation and propaganda alone and by organizational manoeuvre.

‘Revolutionary Jacobinism’

Roy charges us of overestimating the role of the proletariat, of nursing ‘the dream of a working class party leading the anti-imperialist struggle.’ This is false. We are not making the establishment of a proletarian leadership the pre-condition of developing a decisive assault on imperialism. On the other hand it is Roy who makes the creation of a ‘revolutionary democratic leadership’ the pre-condition of unfolding any struggle. This new leadership according to Roy is the leadership of the Revolutionary Jacobinism of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie. If by this is not meant a Left phrase mongering leadership but a leadership which is able to move the masses to decisive action, it cannot arise without the political activities of the working class acting in unison with the peasantry. That means Roy’s alternative leadership would involve the creation of proletarian hegemony in the democratic revolution if it is to achieve anything. And it is this leadership which, Roy proposes to produce without the proletariat, out of his sleeve so to speak, and then proceed to transform the Congress into a revolutionary people’s party. The struggle comes after these preliminaries are finished. The whole proposition is mechanical, schematic and altogether unrealistic. By making the issue of change of leadership a precondition he puts the cart before the horse. He has said it in so many words:

Before we can put forward any policy into practice or advocate any radical change in the programme of our movement, internal affairs of the Congress must be built up as a powerful political organization free from all its present defects. Only after that it will be possible for us to raise more fundamental issues precipitating the final stage of the struggle.

Independent India, 26 February 1939.

Who is the Main Enemy?

While Roy ignores the forces of the proletariat, he also underestimates the influence, its objective role and the manoeuvring capacity of the bourgeoisie as well. He over simplifies the task of replacing it. Gandhian leadership is not merely the leadership of a bunch of obscurantist feudal reactionaries. It is a leadership with a bourgeois class basis. It has a hold on the broad masses because its role as the opponent of the Government, of imperialism, is not yet exhausted. In the present situation as we stated above, it can be made to go a long way forward before it would dare to split the Congress and the nationalist movement. The central task today is not to concentrate the main fire on this leadership at all, but to develop mass initiative in spreading partial struggles and in activizing the Congress committees through them. The main enemy is imperialism. Roy’s line makes struggle against the Right the precondition of any struggle against imperialism. This is disruptive. It is just playing into the hands of the splitters. His League of Radical Congressmen is just a ‘left sectarian’ move which would split the Left. It places before it the presumptuous ‘task of laying the foundations of a new revolutionary leadership’, but he has nothing to say in co-ordinating and uniting all the existing Left forces, for the purpose of developing partial struggles of the Kisans and Workers, of the States’ peoples, of unitedly fighting undemocratic tendencies within the Congress, of unitedly building up the committees.

A Strange Argument

The strangest argument which Roy has advanced against the Communist line is our application of the People's Front tactics. The argument is: 'Service limitation of the People's Front tactics suitable for different conditions, have persuaded the so-called Communist Party of India to make a United Front with the anti-revolutionary Right wing on the latter's terms. That is not a united front made with a revolutionary purpose; it is a sheer betrayal of the anti-imperialist struggle'. This is a surprising change of front! We were under the impression that Roy and his disciples prided themselves on being originators of the line of the 7th World Congress. We have from Com. V.B. Karnik that 'after the Seventh World Congress there are now in theory no important points of difference between the two Communist groups.' In theory, the present line is completely 'Royist' (*Our differences*, M.N. Roy, page 174). As far as we understand the line of the 7th World Congress, it formulated the tactics of the Popular Front against fascism for European countries and formulated a special application of it—the line of the Anti-Imperialist People's Front for India and China. V.B. Karnik as quoted above agrees with the formulation in theory at least. But Com. Roy has now found a fundamental objection against it.

What is that basic theoretical objection? In France and Spain the People's Front was organized for defending the democratic form of Government against the tide of fascism. The situation in India is entirely different. 'It is entirely erroneous to find any analogy between a democratic State and the Indian National Congress'. Bravo! And hear another brilliant argument: 'But even their policy had any application only in those countries where democratic institutions existed. That being the case, the People's Front policy has no place in India. Here there is no question of defending democratic institutions but of conquering democratic rights. Therefore, Popular Front tactics are not of use here'.

Popular Specific Form of Class Alliance

Popular Front tactics are a specific form of class alliance. The justification for it is to be sought not in the fact of its being used for defence or for an attack. The test is whether this grouping of our force is the most favourable in defeating the common enemy—imperialism in the given situation. We have to conquer democratic liberties, create a democratic state. True. Have we not therefore to draw together all the classes which are opposed to imperialism and which are united within the Congress? What is the relevance of telling us that the Indian National Congress is not analogous to a democratic state? Let him tell us that he is now revising the formulation that the Congress was the united front of the Indian people (*Our Differences*, p. 167) and that he has now gone over to new formulations: 'Congress is not threatened by any counter-revolutionary offensive'. 'The revolutionary anti-imperialist forces cannot deliver the final blow to imperialism on the defensive as long as Congress remains under the present leadership'.

Constitutionalism and Compromise

War pending, British imperialism is getting involved in greater and greater difficulties. The forces of struggle are growing in India on all hands. But the Left—the forces of workers and peasants struggle—by themselves are unable to lead the limited forces in battle. Unity of the entire Congress including the national bourgeoisie can be pressed forward by the Left to an offensive, if not to the final battle. In this situation, Roy wants to raise the ultra-leftist slogan of 'first opening the attack on the allies. This line amounts to splitting the Left, and disrupting the unity of the national struggle. It is the same type of anti-popular frontist argument, which the Trotskyist–Poumists raised in Spain and China. To say that the Rightist or bourgeois elements who dominate the Congress

organizationally, cannot be expected to take any stand against imperialism because their aspirations will be satisfied, at least partially under the new Constitution, is to ignore realities.

This is admitted on all hands and even by its bourgeois critics, that the new Constitution with its federal part is a retrograde measure, an offensive against all sections of the Indian people. It further strangulates the industrial development of India and consolidates the tightening grip of British Finance Capital on Indian national resources. Politically, it creates and strengthens the reactionary forces to keep down the growing power of the popular will. We know, that in spite of all its reactionary features the National bourgeoisie and the section of the leadership which is under its influence will not take the initiative in launching a revolutionary mass offensive against it. But in view of the rising tide of popular struggle the leadership of the Congress is not of one mind. The forces of compromise cannot have it their own way. The forces capable of preventing compromise and of keeping the unity of the Congress for an offensive are strong and are growing stronger. We want to strengthen these forces. Roy's tactics would disrupt them. These are our differences! Roy's opposition to popular front tactics is on a part with Trotskyist opposition in Spain and China. His line is that of splitting the Congress. His League of Radical Congressmen is the instrument of this policy. He will earn the blessings of the enemies of the people.

Consistent class analysis has never been Roy's strong point. He has made a sudden change of front and come out with an ultra-left policy to fish in troubled waters. He hopes to wean away the Socialist and Communist rank and file by his new antics. He will be sadly disappointed. His ultra-leftism is playing into the hands of the compromisers in the National Front. To make a bid for alternative leadership in the present stage of the development of our struggle is a preparation of suicide for the left and thus opening the gate wide for capitulation. The slogan of converting the Congress into a narrow 'disciplined revolutionary people's Party' is an open invitation to the Gandhi Seva Sangh to convert it into a seat of Satyagrahis accepting Gandhism in its entirety. His crusade of vilification of the Socialists and Communists is a serious menace to Left unity which is so urgently needed on the eve of the AICC for defending the democracy in the Congress, and for fighting for the implementing of the National Demand resolution. Roy may flaunt the banner of radicalism but essentially he is an inverted Rightist.

¹ Adhikari Gangadhar (1898–1981); prominent Marxist theoretician and prolific writer, was in Berlin between 1922 and 1928; elected Chairman of the Indian Association in Central Europe formed by Virendranath Chattopadhyay in 1927; attended the first All-India Conference of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties in Calcutta and the underground meetings of the CPI Central Committee in December 1928; sentenced in the Meerut Conspiracy Case; played a leading role in the reorganization of the CPI in 1933–34 and became its General Secretary; interned in Bijapur during 1934–37; edited the *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*.

51. South Kanara Students' Conference

Bombay Chronicle, 25 April 1939.

Mangalore
25 April 1939

'Students are not expected to smash laws and fill jails,' declared Mrs Violet Alva, Advocate, Vice-President of the Nationalist Christian Party and Honorary Professor of English at the Karve's Women's College at Bombay, opening the South Kanara Students' Conference during the last week at Mangalore.

There was a large attendance of students from throughout the district and Mr Joachim Alva of Bombay Youth League and Bombay Students' Brotherhood-fame presided at the Conference.

Mrs Violet Alva deplored the idea of students devoting all their attention to mere studies only, unmindful of any other obligations. 'Intellectual husbandry is a sheer necessity; but it deteriorates when it sows trifles and scatters small things and insignificant objects.'

Quoting Tagore, Mrs Violet Alva condemned the system of education by which a race of clerks and Police Inspectors was produced. Emphasizing the necessity of a strong students' organization for the district, she hoped that the students would render a better account of themselves in the next national fight for freedom.

Mr K. Ramkrishna Karant, MLA the late Parliamentary Secretary to the Government of Madras, welcoming Mr and Mrs Joachim Alva to Mangalore lauded their nationalist spirit and Mr Alva's valiant fights in Bombay.

Reception at Harbour

On their arrival at the Mangalore harbour, Mrs and Mr Joachim Alva were accorded a hearty reception by students and leading citizens. On the day of the Conference they were taken in procession by the students through the principal streets of Mangalore.

Messages from Leaders

Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress President, wiring his message stated: 'Students are the makers of history. Wish Conference success under your distinguished presidentship.'

The Hon'ble Mr C.J. Varkey, Madras Education Minister, felt proud that one of his most distinguished old boy who was in the forefront of the nationalist movement was presiding at the conference. He wished it every success.

Amongst others who sent messages were Premier Kher, Mr Srinivasa Iyengar, the Swami of the foremost Mutt of Udipi and Mr Shah.

Mr Joachim Alva in his presidential address lasting over an hour urged the necessity of a strong students' movement which would render an excellent account of itself in any national fight. No national programme for the country's regeneration would be complete which would not take account of the students. He instanced the case of the Egyptian students, Chinese Students and the British students during the time of the Great War. Even Mrs Roosevelt, the wife of the American President, had thundered that the world today was governed by youth.

Mr Joachim Alva condemned outright the existence of communal students unions, which were the unhappy feature of Bombay; and warned the Kanara students against such moves. He suggested the formation of Students' Own Hostels, run by themselves; also co-operative societies for the purchasing of books and to grant loans to students on trifling rates of interest. The President wanted the students to claim a share in the running of every students' college or school so that they may be fitted with a sense of responsibility and thus troubles in schools and colleges may also be ended. Mr Alva claimed the right for students to discuss any topic under the sun, as well read any existing book as long as these things were not immoral or indecent.

Student's Brigades

He exhorted the students to form Students' Brigades, so that they may be trained in military and physical training. 'Students should not be made pawns in any party game; they should refuse to be victims of unscrupulous politicians,' he said. 'Students' organizations should not have too much or too little of politics' was the advice given by the President.

Students should possess sound political, religious and economic ideas so that when the time came for action they might not get stranded and confused. Strikes in colleges were common

because of the entire absence of extra-curricular activities like sports, dramas, dances and meetings between teachers and the taught.

‘Give them more of these and there will be less strikes in schools and colleges; otherwise the forbidden excitement and crushed enthusiasm of students will break out and mischievously envelop the entire system.’

Twenty resolutions were passed by the students in their sessions.

On Sunday evening, Mr Joachim Alva and Mrs Violet Alva addressed a public meeting on the Maidan at Mangalore when a large cosmopolitan audience, especially of Catholics was there. Mr J.A. Saldanha, MLC, presided.

Earlier, Dr K. Vittal Shetty, the Chairman of the District Board of South Kanara and President of South Kanara Students’ Confederation was at home to Mr and Mrs Alva.

His Lordship the Bishop of Mangalore received the visitors from Mangalore as well as the Jesuit Father of the St Aloysius College.

On the eve of their departure for Bombay, a public reception was given by the citizens of Udupi, headed by Mr R. Andrade, a leading businessman and Congressman, in honour of Mr and Mrs Joachim Alva, when both officials and non-officials were present.

52. Student’s Representation Against the Congress Ministry:

Jayman Dave and Champaklal Bhatt to K.M. Munshi, 29 March 1939

Home Department (Special), File No. 895, Part 3, 1938–40, Maharashtra State Archives.

We, the undersigned Mr Champaklal Bhatt and Miss Jayman Dave, the secretaries of the Gujarat Radical Youth’s Association, most respectfully bring to your notice the following few facts:

We and the members of our Association have been loyal Congressmen of long-standing and have been carrying on the peaceful and legitimate activities of the Congress. We enroll Congress members not on a mass scale but individually after explaining to the persons the principle and programme of the Congress, and thus are seriously working against the corruption that is eating out the vitals of the Congress.

The Congress is bound by its resolutions and the pledges issued through election manifesto to protect the civil liberties of the people and to maintain the freedom of speech, action and organization. Moreover, at its last session at Tripuri, it has, though all the while sympathizing with the struggle of the States’ people for the establishment of the responsible type of Government, resolved to take an active part in their struggle for the establishment of the responsible type of Government, resolved to take an active part in their struggle for the establishment of the same and thereby civil liberties. Only recently the Congress ministries in various provinces threatened to resign for the same principle of the protection of civil liberties of the people and the establishment of democratic institutions in the States.

Nevertheless today we find ourselves more deprived of civil liberties than our brethren in the Native States....

The nefarious activities carried on by the local police, viz., effecting searches for mainly political purposes at the places of the loyal Congressmen and even in their absence, are simply deplorable. The despicable attitude of the popular ministries is only regrettable. But after all, from whom can we expect protection if not from the popular ministries of the Congress?

The Congress won elections and is in power only on the sufferance of the people. The people backed up the Congress because it issued pledges to them and promised them protection of civil liberties among other things. And this is how the Congress is keeping its sacred word—the sacred pledges issued at the time of the elections!

We therefore humbly demand that the activities of the local police must be immediately checked and the civil liberties of the people protected. We hope the authorities will take immediate action upon this.

The following resolution has been passed at the general meeting of the Gujarat Radical Youths' Association:

This meeting protests against the activities of the local police in effecting searches at the places of some loyal Congressmen who are continuing the peaceful and legitimate activities of the Congress. It further requests the Congress Ministry to look into the matter, and demands protection of the civil liberties of the people for which the Congress is pledged.

53. Tasks Before the Left-Wing: Activize the Base

Article by S.G. Sardesai, *National Front*, 30 April 1939.

30 April 1939

The stagnation and inaction that have set in the nationalist ranks since Tripuri, mainly on account of the crisis created by the Congress presidential election but partly also by the widespread misunderstanding and confusion regarding the new approach of the Marxists towards the Gandhian leadership, necessitate the re-enunciation of certain basic conditions of this approach, a clear statement of the tasks of Congressmen in general and of Left Congressmen in particular in the new situation that has developed since Tripuri.

A New Attitude Towards Gandhian Leadership

In the first place it must not be supposed that the new Marxian approach towards the Gandhian leadership is based on a revision of the Marxian evaluation of Gandhism *per se*. It is based on a re-evaluation of the role of the Gandhian leadership in the entirely transformed national and international background of the period through which we are at present passing. What are the broad features of this period? First, the terrible intensification of social and political reaction all over the world and the persistent menace of fascist (aggression) war, in which background even compromising and reformist social philosophies and tendencies attain a transitional progressive role. Secondly, the very rapid growth in the class and nationalist consciousness and organization of the masses, particularly the working class, peasantry, urban petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia, which reduce the danger of successful reformist surrender from the top almost to a minimum and enable these new forces to wield even reformist slogans and bend reformist activities to aggressive anti-imperialist ends. Thirdly, the new role which under the foregoing conditions devolves on the forces of radical nationalism, viz., the active unifier of all the forces struggling not only for full independence but even for partial democratic demands. The Leftists from being propagandists have, in this period, become responsible organizers and leaders of the struggle, gathering round themselves the very tiniest force that can at all contribute to the achievement of national independence. It is obvious that in such conditions the Leftists not only do not need to but must not continue their old attitude towards Gandhism and Gandhian leadership. They have exposed the shortcomings of Gandhism sufficiently in the past. With the new strength at their command the time and the opportunity have come for them to weld even Gandhism with the new nationalism that is exuberantly spreading out at this very hour in every hut and chawl, every field and factory, every shop and school room in India.

Gandhism in 1920

This necessitates a very close study of and emphasis on every positive side of Gandhism particularly during its militant anti-imperialist phase between 1919 and 1920. How many for instance, are aware that the columns of *Young India* during this period teem with statements from Gandhiji's pen that he would any day welcome India becoming free through violence than continue to be a slave because of non-violence if the latter has to become a fetter on the progress towards independence? How many know of his passionate advocacy for proportional representation being incorporated in the Congress Constitution in 1920? How many know of his endless emphasis on the necessity of the intelligentsia identifying itself with the masses as a necessary condition for the achievement of Indian Independence and of the role of the *Charkha* as a powerful instrument of this process? How many have read the following passage from *Young India* dated November 3rd, 1920 taking a remarkably bold view of the relationship of the rank and file and the leadership in a mass movement? 'I know that the proposed alteration (in the Congress Constitution) has been subjected to hostile criticism in the several newspapers of note. But the extraordinary situation that faces the country is that popular opinion is far in advance of several newspapers... the formation of opinion today is by no means confined to the educated classes, but the masses have taken it upon themselves not only to formulate opinion but to enforce it.... It would be a mistake to be little or ignore this opinion, or to ascribe it, to a temporary upheaval.... We (referring to himself and the Ali brothers) have the ear of the masses because we voice their sentiments. The masses are by no means so foolish or unintelligent as we sometimes imagine, they often perceive things with their intuition, which we ourselves fail to see with our intellect. But while the masses know what they want, they often do not know how to express their wants and less often, how to get what they want. Herein comes the use of leadership.'

What a contrast with the 'reception' given by many a renowned Gandhite today to the newer aspirations that are swelling the hearts of our masses. It is not the purpose of this article to elaborate on this point in detail. So I shall only refer to the national revolutionary interpretation given by Gandhiji to the Khilafat movement in 1920. On one occasion, when asking what should be done if Kemal Pasha did not support the 'Khilafat' he replied that the cause of the Khilafat could not be in safer hands than Kemal's. This is the Gandhism that we have to resurrect, burnish and replenish. It will at once win all to the anti-imperialist struggle, the 'true' Gandhites for whom Gandhism is still an anti-imperialist inspiration and guide to action, and isolate those who would use it as an instrument for damning, disrupting and calling off the surging tide of mass discontent today.

Gandhism in 1939

So much about the basic approach. But even this will not suffice, the reason being that the Gandhism of 1939 is not the Gandhism of 1920, and the effort today is, both in view of the critical political situation and Gandhiji's unique role as the greatest unifier of nationalist ranks, to get along even with the Gandhism of the day so long as it is at all possible to do so without detriment to the needs of the national movement. But this is by no means a very easy process, for the Gandhian leadership itself is not (to put it mildly) very eager to co-operate with the new tendencies in the Congress and is steeped in every kind of prejudice against it.

How to Achieve Joint Struggle

What is to be done? The only course is to activate the base of the Congress and through it and other mass organizations like Kisan Sabhas and Trade Unions, the people at large, to such a pitch that the leadership will not think of rejecting the hand of cooperation held out by the Left, excepting at peril to its own position in the national movement. This means first and foremost the intensification

and integration of every mass struggle for partial demands, a point on which the Gaya Session of the Kisan Congress laid the most correct and opportune emphasis. It means making 'the go-ahead decisions of Tripuri' a live and burning reality for the masses.

Implement Tripuri Decisions

Tripuri welcomed the new awakening in the Indian masses, anticipated Congress intervention in States, declared unrelenting opposition to imperialist war and fascism, called upon the people of India to prepare themselves for a nation-wide offensive against Federation, declared that the Constituent Assembly is the only alternative to Federation acceptable to India, and that the principle of self-determination must be immediately applied to it, politely, but unequivocally, reminded the Congress Ministers that the time for winding up their business was drawing very close and that in the meanwhile, too, they must pay less heed to constitutional considerations than to the pressing needs of the masses, and finally, as the indispensable means for the achievement of these ends, appeal to all Congressmen and the people to strengthen the Congress in order to make it a still more effective organ of the people's will.

What effort have Congressmen, and particularly the Leftists as the most energetic and restless among them, made since Tripuri to carry out these tasks? How far did they succeed, in galvanizing the National Week activities to this end? What protest did they raise in the country when Gandhiji, instead of intensifying the States' people's struggle after Tripuri in accordance with the spirit of its resolution on the States, suspended the struggle altogether. What have they done to educate the rank and file Congressmen in the matter of the true chances required in the Congress Constitution and to prevent the 'purification' resolution becoming a mandate for launching a crusade against the Leftists? Of course, difficulties in the execution of these tasks exist. The tangle of the Working Committee has confused and demoralized the people. It has made them apathetic towards politics. Local Right Wing leaders do not appreciate an emphasis on this side of Tripuri, but reduce its message to 'wait for Gandhiji's orders, meanwhile do nothing, do not even think, for that is want of confidence in Gandhiji.' In fact, local leaders do every thing to suppress the laying of such emphasis. But there is no ready-made and easy solution of this problem. The popularization of these decisions of Tripuri has to be carried out despite the resistance from those elements in the Congress that do not desire to carry them out loyally and fully. This resistance cannot be evaded. It is an organic and inseparable, and to the extent that this is skillfully and successfully done will the Right wing leaders to co-operate with the newer forces in the Congress. Tripuri will go down in Indian history as the session that sounded the bugle for the final battle for national liberation. That must be the policy of every genuine Congressman, a policy in the execution of which the Leftists, as the most conscious and earnest Congressmen, have to take an initiative and help every other Congressman. Activize the base in accordance with the go-ahead decisions of Tripuri and resist every impediment that obstructs such activization. This must be our battle-cry.

54. On Forward Bloc: Mr Bose's New Move

Editorial, *Hindu*, 4 May 1939.

4 May 1939

It is a perfectly legitimate ambition for any minority inside a political body to organize itself and try to convert the majority to its way of thinking. But the aims and objects of the 'Forward Bloc' which Mr Subhas Bose proposes to form inside the Congress, as set out in his statement published elsewhere, are confused and contradictory. We are told that it will be not a party in the ordinary

sense, but a platform for rallying all those who accept its programme. But Mr Bose's statement curiously enough begins with the declaration that the Bloc 'will function as an integral part of the Congress' and that 'it will accept the present constitution of the Congress—its creed, policy and programme.' It is difficult to understand how any organization can claim that its programme is identical with that of the Congress and at the same time it is something the acceptance of which would be the differential, distinguishing one section of Congressmen from the rest. Mr Bose hopes that in course of time the Bloc 'will draw into its fold all the Radical and Socialist elements and parties in the Congress.' But he admits that prominent Socialists do not favour the idea. In the circumstances it seems rather optimistic on Mr Bose's part to expect that the other sections of Left opinion—the ultra-Socialists and the radical non-Socialists—will take up the idea with greater enthusiasm, since they represent the two extremes on the Left and are not likely to agree to any programme merely on the ground that it might not be acceptable to the Right wing or, as Mr Bose would prefer to call them, the official group within the Congress.

That, however, is the domestic concern of the Left. What the public would like to know clearly is the object of the Left-consolidation to which Mr Bose has decided to devote himself, though up to a short time ago he thought it would be best for him to remain outside the movement, while friendly to it. Mr Bose notes with satisfaction the propagation of Socialist ideas among the public in the past few years and the consequent permeation of large masses of the people with the ideas of anti-Imperialism, Democracy and Socialism. But he thinks that organizational effort has not kept pace with agitational endeavour, and hence the setback the Leftists have suffered in the past year or two. He proposes to rectify this defect by setting up the Forward Bloc, which, he argues, would be the Left counterpart of the Gandhi Seva Sangh. But the Sangh is not a political party at all. It is not easy to see now any section of Congressmen could, as Mr Bose speaking for the Forward Bloc does, say that it subscribes to the creed, policy and programme of the Congress and yet think that a rival organization is needed in order to off-set the activities of the Gandhi Seva Sangh and help 'the Left in the Congress come into its own.'

The Forward Bloc, we are told, is to evolve a minimum programme 'which would represent the greatest common measure of agreement among radicals of all shades of opinion.' This apparently cannot be the same as the present programme of the Congress; nor can the policy of the Forward Bloc, as defined by Mr Bose, be the same as that of the Congress, as it comprehends Socialism, which the Congress has not accepted so far. To say, as Mr Bose does, that the Bloc will have the same policy and programme as the Congress, can only be intended to confuse the public—not the less because of the sentiments of respect and regard which, according to Mr Bose, the Bloc will cherish for Mahatma Gandhi and his ideal of non-violence. Mr Bose cites the precedent of the Swaraj Party in support of the new move; but that Party did not go about saying that its programme was the same as that of the Congress; on the contrary, it challenged the Congress openly by putting forward the programme of Council-entry. Mr Bose argues, rather unconvincingly, that the uncompromising attitude of the High Command has necessitated the formation of the new Bloc. But the High Command has done nothing but faithfully carry out the policy and programme that the Congress, accepted long ago under Gandhiji's guidance. The move to form a Left Bloc is so obviously the work of a disgruntled element that the general public will have no difficulty in sizing it up correctly.



55. The Forward Bloc

Editorial, *Tribune*, 5 May 1939.

5 May 1939

Enlightened and dispassionate opinion in India, whether within or outside the Congress, will accord a warm and unhesitating welcome to the proposal to form a Forward Bloc in the Congress for 'rallying all radical and anti-Imperialist progressive elements on the basis of a minimum programme which would represent the greatest common measure of agreement among radicals of all shades of opinion.' Such a Bloc has, in our opinion, been long a desideratum, and in view of recent events within the Congress and of the international situation that is fast developing, it has not been formed a day too soon. In the statement he has just issued announcing the formation of the Bloc, Subhas Chandra Bose has not only explained clearly the aims and the character of the new organization, but made out an unanswerable case for it. Practically the only argument that is relied upon for opposing this and similar moves is that it will accentuate the forces of division in the country at a time when unity is its paramount and outstanding need. To that argument, Bose gives a cogent and, in our opinion, perfectly convincing reply. In the first place the Left, as he says, believes in national unity more than the Right. That is why it has in all recent discussions stood for a composite cabinet, while the Right has stood for a homogeneous one. Secondly, if the Right can have its Gandhi Seva Sangh without destroying national unity, with what plausibility can it say that the formation of a Forward Bloc, in opposition to the official bloc, will interfere with it? Only those whose conception of national unity is wholly one-sided and who, while desiring and advocating national unity really want unity on their own terms, that is, on the basis of the subordination of all other parties and groups to themselves, can find in the formation of the Forward Bloc a danger to national unity.

In reality national unity can become a solid reality only through the existence and the proper functioning of two or more, preferably two main parties in the country's greatest national organization. It is not merely an official Parliament that needs an opposition as well as a party in power for its proper and efficient functioning. It is needed just as much in an unofficial Parliament. In the absence of a well-organized opposition the official party naturally grows arrogant, intolerant and irresponsible, and the apparent unity of the organization is brought about only by a stern suppression of differences and the consequent driving of the forces of discontent, bitterness and resentment underground. Every one knows that this is exactly what has been happening in the Congress since the Swarajists merged their existence in the general body of Congressmen, after having gained one essential part of their objective....

Nor is there any rational or philosophical basis for the statement that the formation of an Opposition Bloc in the Congress would necessarily make for the weakness and disunity of the Congress. In the first place true unity, as we know it today, is a unity-in-difference and not a barren, mechanical identity. Secondly, as a famous German philosopher, confronted by sharp differences in the ranks of his former adherents, said: 'A party first truly shows it breaks up into two parties for so it proves that it contains, in itself the principle with which at first it had to conflict, and thus that it has gone beyond the one-sidedness which was incidental to its earliest expression. In this point of view that discord which appears at first to be a lamentable breach and dissociation of the unity of a party is really the crowning proof of its success.' In the present case Bose in his statement makes two things abundantly clear. The first is that the new Bloc will function as an integral part of the Congress, accept the present Congress constitution, its creed, policy and programme. That does not and cannot mean that it will not be open to it to urge modifications in all or any of these things. Even the Rightist are not wholly satisfied with the present constitution of

the Congress, and the Mahatma himself has a repeatedly urged modification in it in vital respects. The new Bloc will certainly claim and exercise the same right in the fullest measure. In point of fact it would have no *raison d'être* if it accepted not only the constitution of the Congress and its creed, but its policy and programme as the last word of wisdom. The fact that the policy and programme of the Congress needs stiffening in some important directions is an essential part of Bose's case for the new party.

The other thing is that the new Bloc will cherish the highest respect and regard for Mahatma Gandhi's personality and will have complete faith in the political doctrine of non-violent non-co-operation. This is of course, the only right thing for the new party to do. The Mahatma has a dual personality. He is at once the head of the Congress and political India, representing as he does the soul of India in revolt against her many-sided subjection and determined to win for her complete emancipation from bondage, and then he is the head of the Rightists. In the first capacity he is entitled to the homage of all who love India and wish to see her free and great. In the second he is the head of an enthusiastic band of followers who want every word that he utters to be implicitly accepted and every direction or command he issues to be unquestioningly obeyed. The Mahatma himself, the man of truth and honour that he is, has again and again confessed that he has committed Himalayan blunders, but to his devoted followers and lieutenants he is the personification of infallibility. If he ever draws up a resolution, or expresses his approval of it, not a word or even comma is to be changed in it. We have made no secret of our opinion that this blind worship of a great man is as demoralizing to himself as to the worshippers, and we have sometimes actually felt, in the midst of great national misfortunes, that the failures, disappointments and setbacks which the Mahatma has occasionally met with have not been without their compensating value in India's scheme of national regeneration. Bose rightly says that respect for the Mahatma will not mean that the new party will necessarily have confidence in the present High Command of the Congress. For that matter it should not mean unquestioning obedience to every behest of the Mahatma himself. At a time of war, whether active or passive, such obedience not only has its value but is indispensable. But at other times it can only produce widespread demoralization. If the new party is to function properly, it must approach all questions with a due sense of proportion and of responsibility. While it would be absolutely within its rights in opposing the official Party in respect of any measure or policy it advocates, it should not itself advocate any policy or measure which it would not be in its power to carry out. By such advocacy it can do far greater harm to itself than it is in the power of its opponents to do to it.

56. Forward Bloc

Government of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, Roll No. 12, West Bengal State Archives.

6 May 1939

Subhas Bose and His New Programme

Subhas Bose announced the formation of new bloc within the Congress to be known as the 'Forward Bloc' at a gathering of about 10,000 persons, including 30 uniformed volunteers, at Shraddhanand Park on 3.5.39. The meeting was organized to congratulate Subhas on the stand he took in connection with the recent crisis in the Congress.¹ Santosh Kumar Basu presided.

The object of the 'Forward Bloc' which Subhas decided to start is to rally all radical and anti-imperialist progressive elements in the country on the basis of a minimum programme, representing the greatest common measure of agreement among radicals of all shades of opinion. It will function

as an integral part of the Congress, accept the present constitution of the Congress, its creed, policy and programme and would cherish the highest respect and regard for Gandhi's personality, and have complete faith in his political creed of non-violent non-co-operation. That would not, however, mean that it would necessarily have confidence in the present High Command of the Congress. An internal crisis in the Congress, Subhas Bose said, was inevitable; it would be better not to postpone the evil day. But a temporary split, he added, is necessary for the sake of political advancement.

Tracing the history of the left-wing in the Congress he started how in 1938 prominent Socialists discouraged the idea of a left bloc and how at Tripuri it was suggested that a new name should be given to it. Subhas also argued that the new bloc would not hamper the progress of the Congress. The Gandhi Seva Sangh exists behind the Congress and supplies the energy to the official bloc of the Congress; similarly the 'Forward Bloc' will strengthen the left wing. He appealed to those who believed in this programme to join the party.

The meeting passed resolutions appealing to the public throughout India to support Subhas and to help in raising a fund of at least one lakh of rupees to be given to him for the political uplift of India; declaring that the inclusion in the Working Committee of Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy and Profulla Ghosh is against the unanimous opinion of the people of Bengal and calling upon them to resign their seats.

Sardar Jamait Singh on behalf of the Sikh residents of Calcutta announced a donation of Rs 1000 to the purse to be presented to Subhas. Dr Rabindra Nath Tagore sent a message to Subhas congratulating him and wishing that his apparent defeat would be turned into a permanent victory.

Secret Information

Secret information since received shows that Subhas's downfall and his subsequent proposal to form a separate party resulted in some changes in the alignment of political parties particularly in Bengal. One information is to the effect that Subhas will work with the support of M.N. Roy, while another states that Roy will work separately with a different programme. In this connection two agents report that there was a secret meeting of Leftists at Subhas Bose's house on May 2nd, and the following were present.

K.F. Nariman, Sardul Singh Cavesheer, Dr Kitchlew, Prof. N.G. Ranga (AIKC), Sahajanand Saraswati (AIKC), Bhupen Sanyal, M.N. Roy, Kumaranand (Ajmere), D. Raghavia, Lakshman Shastri Joshi (Poona), Tayeb Sheik (M.N. Roy's group), Dr Dhiren Sen (Ananda Bazar Group), Suresh Mazumdar (Ananda Bazar Group), Bankim Mukherji (CPI), Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar (BLP), Dr Charu Banarji (ED, CSP), Humayun Kabir, Asrafuddin Chaudhury, Nausher Ali, Pratul Ganguly (SD, CSP), Meher Ali (AICSP), Jay Prakash Narain (AICSP), S. Sardesai (CPI), R.D. Bharadwaj (CPI).

Subhas announced his intention of forming the 'Forward Bloc' and asked those present to think the matter over and give him suggestions, to which all agreed.

A reliable agent reported yesterday (5/5) that M.N. Roy had not yet decided to join the new 'Forward Bloc' as he wants to see what is the outcome of the final talks between Jugantar leaders and Jadu Gopal Mukherji, and the idea of Gandhi worship as expressed by Subhas does not appeal to him.

One agent reports that Subhas would organize an all-India party on the issue of Federation and that the Anushilan and Sree Sangha and important leaders such as Bepin Ganguly, Nariman, Govindananda of Karachi and others would support him. The CPI and CSP will, it is said, persuade Subhas to form a United Front instead of a new bloc on the Federation issue. Bankim Mukherji is

said to have stated that Communists are opposed to any measure that might divide the Congress. They want Subhas to remain one with the Congress so that they can utilize his popularity in Bengal to further the cause of the Communist party through the Congress.

It is also reported that Subhas proposes to organize a National Militia. He has ordered the enlistment of 4000 volunteers in Calcutta under the command of Hemanta Bose for whom there are already 500 uniforms. Later on, funds permitting, its strength will be increased to a lakh and it will be extended to the whole of Bengal. Subhas hopes thereby to enhance his popularity and also to use them in the event of strikes and to fight reactionaries who hamper national progress. Subhas has directed the BPCC to prepare another 1500 uniforms. The CPI welcome the idea of a National Militia as they hope to enlist many of their members in the corps and through the Platoon leaders to spread the communist creed among the rank and file. They propose to send instructions to this effect to their important centres in the province viz., Hooghly, 24-Parganas, Noakhali, Mymensingh, Pabna, Rajshahi and Central Calcutta.

At a tea party which the BPCC gave to the members of the AICC on 1.5.39, it is said, the general talks centered round the resignation episode of Subhas. The general opinion was that Congress has lost much of its ground and that the final punishment to the Congress High Command would be to re-elect Subhas as the president for 1940.

¹ Speakers: Prabhat Ganguly, Maulvi Ahmad Ali, Sardul Singh Cavesheer, Govindananda Swami, Narendra Narain Chakravarti, Nausher Ali, Sudhir Chandra Roy Chaudhury and G.E. Gibbon.

57. K.F. Nariman's Support to Forward Bloc

Bombay Chronicle, 8 May 1939.

8 May 1939

A fervent appeal to Congressmen in Bombay to support the 'Forward Bloc' proposed to be started by Subhas Chandra Bose, was made by K.F. Nariman; presiding over a public meeting held at the Blavatsky Lodge on Sunday evening.

'It will be a bloc within the Congress,' said Nariman, 'obeying the Congress constitution in every detail and striving to save that great organization from Fascist clutches into which it has drifted. Its aim will be to restore democracy to the Congress organization.'

A resolution congratulating Subhas Chandra Bose on the 'bold, patriotic and correct' step he had taken in tendering resignation from the Presidentship and appealing to Congressmen to support the 'Forward Bloc', was moved by H.V. Kamath. Speeches in support of the resolution were made by Prabhu Madan Shetty, Khimji Cheda, J.R. Shastri, Girdhar and Rajaram Pandya and Vasanti Devi from Nagpur.

'The restraint and dignity with which Subhas Chandra Bose had conducted himself at Calcutta,' said Nariman, 'were praiseworthy.' He had done all that a democrat was expected to do. He had tried to obey Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant's resolution not only in words but also in spirit. If only his opponents had shown the same tolerance and magnanimity which had characterized the actions of Babu Subhas Chandra Bose, the country would have been saved the unfortunate controversy which had followed the presidential election.

Nariman criticized the system by which the same group in the Congress had been allowed to be in the Congress Cabinet for fifteen or twenty years in succession. Time was when the Working Committee was merely an executive body, but today it was much more than that because it

controlled eight Ministries. What Subhas Chandra Bose had pleaded for was that he might be allowed to infuse new blood in the Congress Working Committee....

58. Two-fold Task Before Forward Bloc: S.C. Bose

Bombay Chronicle, 8 May 1939.

8 May 1939

The points of difference between the 'Forward Bloc' and the official bloc or any group within the Congress was clarified by Subhas Chandra Bose, addressing a mass meeting at Howrah this evening.

'There is a two-fold distinction,' said Bose: 'Firstly, the Forward Bloc desires to work the existing programme of the Congress not with a reformist or moderate mentality, but with a revolutionary mentality. Secondly, it has an advanced programme of its own, which it will try and persuade the Congress to accept. This advanced programme will have as its objective, the early attainment of India's Independence.'

Leftist Platform

The 'Forward Bloc', being a platform for all anti-Imperialist radical and progressive groups, including the Socialist parties, will naturally have a friendly attitude towards existing Leftist parties or groups in the Congress. It will not do anything consciously to weaken or undermine them. The 'Forward Bloc' expects to have members from these parties or groups.

Reviewing the present position, Bose said: 'There is no doubt that for some time past we have been drifting towards constitutionalism. This tendency has been considerably accentuated, since Congressmen took Ministerial office in several Provinces.'

Moderate Mentality

He emphasized that 'the truly Gandhian spirit of Non-violent Non-Co-operation is being smothered by the newly developed Parliamentary, constitutionalist mentality—which is none other than a moderate mentality.'

Two-fold Task

Dealing with the programme of his party he said: 'The two-fold task of the Forward Bloc will consequently be: Firstly, to instill life and revolutionary impulse into the existing programme of the Congress; and secondly, to prepare the country for the coming struggle through a countrywide agitation and through an advanced Radical programme. This advanced programme the Congress will be persuaded to accept in December, if only to do the necessary propaganda and agitation from now.'

In Forward March

'If it be found ultimately that our Parliamentary machinery is incapable of any further advance or any forward move in the battle of freedom, we may have to discard it and fall back exclusively on a mass movement leading on to mass Satyagraha.'

Barada Prasanna Pyne, MLA, Chairman, Howrah Municipality, announced that the people of Howrah were placing in the hands of Subhas Chandra Bose, a sum of Rs 2500 'spontaneously subscribed in the course of a few hours' in furtherance of his programme.



59. Political Prisoner's Day: Press Statement

AICC Papers, File No. G-7, 1939-40, NMML.

9 May 1939

During the last two years or so a large number of political prisoners who had been detained in prisons with or without trial have been released. But there is still a pretty large number in jails principally in Bengal and also in the Punjab. Mahatma Gandhi interested himself on behalf of the prisoners and detenus of Bengal when they had declared that they had no faith in terroristic methods and he was successful in securing the release of prisoners and also of a certain number of persons convicted in Bengal. He carried on negotiation for a pretty long time regarding others who were not released but ultimately the negotiations failed and although now and then some prisoners are released, there is a large number still in jails in Bengal and also a smaller number in the Punjab. After the prisoners had declared that they had no faith in terrorism, it would have been in the fitness of things to let them off. Those that have been released, have not been shown to have been participating in any terroristic activities and they have shown by their conduct that their declaration was genuine and true. But for some reason or other the Government is not prepared to yield to the popular wish that these prisoners should also be treated in the same way as others who have been released. It needs hardly be stated that there has been universal feeling in favour of these prisoners throughout the country and the All India Congress Committee in Calcutta gave expression to this universal feeling when it passed a resolution (see enclosure: 1) to the effect that a countrywide agitation should be started and an All India Political Prisoners' Day should be observed to give pointed expression to this feeling.¹ In accordance with the resolution of the All India Congress Committee I fix Sunday the 21st May to be observed as Political Prisoners' Day. Meetings should be held on that day and suitable resolutions on the subject should be passed at such meetings. I hope and trust the Day will be observed in a fitting manner all over the country.

Rajendra Prasad

¹ The appeal was widely welcomed. The Socialists and the Communists were among the first to lend their support to the idea of the All-India Political Prisoners' Day. Wrote the *National Front*: 'We whole-heartedly endorse the appeal. The decision has been taken at last. The challenge of imperialism has been accepted. The fact that negotiations have failed has been formally and officially recognised by the Congress. The weapon of mass agitation, discarded since Gandhiji started his negotiations on 13 April last year, has been taken up again.' This extract from the *National Front* (Vol. 2, No. 15, 21 May 1939) was forfeited by the Government of Bengal by a notification issued in Calcutta on 9 June 1939. Home (Political), File No. 37/18/39, 1939, NAI.

[Enclosure: 1]

Resolution adopted at the AICC meeting held at Calcutta.

AICC Papers, File No. P-1, 1939, NMML.

This meeting of the AICC while appreciating the strenuous efforts made by Mahatma Gandhi to secure the release of political prisoners in Bengal, notes with regret the failure of the negotiations between Gandhiji and the Huq Ministry on the matter.

The time during which Gandhiji expected to secure the release of all political prisoners is over. In view of the stiff and callous attitude of the Bengal Ministry and the policy adopted by it, the release of the long-term prisoners had become almost a hopeless question.

In the opinion of the AICC, there is no longer any justification to detain the prisoners in jail who have been convicted during an emergency period mostly under special powers, and especially so when the prisoners have expressed their aversion to terrorism.

This meeting of the AICC, therefore, resolves to make the release of these prisoners a vital All-India issue and instructs the Working Committee to fix All-India Political Prisoners' Day and to direct the Congress Committees to begin a vigorous agitation for the immediate unconditional release of all political prisoners.

Similarly, an agitation should be carried on regarding release of political prisoners in the Punjab also.

60. National Situation and Our Tasks

Article by R.D. Bharadwaj, *New Age*, Vol. 5, No. 12, May 1939.

May 1939

British Imperialism faced with an economic crisis which portends to be greater than the last one which began in 1929 and also forced with increasing threats to its Empire from the rival fascist imperialist powers, finds itself faced with immense difficulties. The policy of Imperialism, therefore, continues to be one of attempting to weaken and disrupt the forces of national struggle and not launch an offensive so as to drive them all into a struggle against it. It has avoided crises wherever the danger of the national forces being driven into a united struggle was there, as in the case of ministerial resignations and Gandhiji's Rajkot fast. It has attempted to weaken the national front by helping the reactionary forces outside it, like the Muslim League, Princes and the Landlords. But since the main danger to its existence is the united struggle of the people under the leadership of the Congress, it has attempted to disrupt the forces inside it. In view of the threatening international situation, and the need of support in times of war, these efforts are unable to uphold its domination with the help of the communal and reactionary forces alone. They are inadequate for the purpose of mobilizing the country's resources to its aid.

Imperialism and National Bourgeoisie

But being faced with economic crisis, Imperialism would not give any substantial concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie in order to placate it. The show of political concessions is superficial. On the contrary the concessions already given are being withdrawn, e.g. reduction of protective tariffs on sugar, textiles, paper, inroads on the rights of Indian businessmen abroad and etc. The registration of foreign capital in India is increasing. Foreign capital is actually pouring in prospective war industries, (iron steel, heavy chemicals, etc.) The scope for extension of Indian capital is being restricted. None of the demand of the Indian bourgeoisie, which cut across imperialist interests, have been satisfied—reduction of ratio, railway freights, reservation of coastal shipping to Indian capital, etc. Faced with falling prices, the coming economic crisis and the impossibility of getting any substantial concessions from imperialism, the bourgeoisie is increasingly being forced to reply upon the support of the masses for defending its interest and for getting its demand satisfied. The bourgeoisie cannot afford to isolate itself from the masses, without whose support it has no weapon of defence or offence against imperialism and of safe-guarding its own interests. The necessity of retaining mass support has, if anything, increased during this period because of the pressure of imperialism. This is the basis of the united national front embracing all sections of the people, whose interests are opposed to the policy of imperialism including even the nationalist bourgeoisie.

Retarding the Growth of Struggle

But the characteristic vacillating role of confining the mass forces within the framework of compromising-politics on the part of the bourgeoisie and its representative, the Right wing leadership, has not disappeared. Only it has to be played on a higher plane. Under pressure of the masses, it was forced to accept the programme of the Congress Election Manifesto and the Faizpur resolutions. Under the pressure of extra-parliamentary struggles, it has been compelled to implement part of that programme after the acceptance of the Ministries, to participate in the States People's movement, to declare itself in favour of preparations for a nation-wide struggle for the National Demand. But the compromising tendency of the Right has been able to prevent the full implementation of this revolutionary programme and in practice to impose a policy of drift upon the Congress. As a result of this, the preparations for the struggle against the Federation have not been systematically carried out, mass struggles have not been co-ordinated and developed, States People's movement has not been centralized and officially supported, and the ministries have not been fully utilized to strengthen the mass forces.

First Period of Ministerial Work

In the Working of the Congress Ministries, this conflict of the two trends within the national front has continued, although the relationship between the two has changed as compared to what it was before.

In the period immediately following the acceptance of offices, the Ministries under the pressure of the masses were forced to make a beginning in implementing the demands of the people. Extension of Civil Liberties and the existence for the first time of Ministries responsive to the masses unleashed the forces of struggle. A wave of extensive strikes and peasant actions began throughout the country, and the Ministries were forced to remove the immediate grievances of the people, like release of political prisoners, restoration of wage-cuts, suspension of suits for debts and rent, etc. These measures of the Ministries (which satisfied only the immediate pressing demands, but did not tackle their causes basically) created great self-confidence amongst the masses, resulted in the vast strata of the backward masses being drawn into struggle and political activity, sharpened their consciousness and drew them in ever larger numbers in the national and their class organizations. This was not confined to the provinces only, but to the States' people as well, who even before this, had begun to move as a result of these developments in the provinces and were infected with new enthusiasm. Thus the States' movement began to grow till it embraced almost all the states.

The New Mass Forces

These forces have to be properly assessed before it is possible for us to evaluate the new situation.

Most of the mass struggles were either spontaneous or initiated by the class organizations. These organizations were either mere agitational, or very weakly organized bodies though having extensive influence over the masses. The struggles were generally confined, as it was bound to be in the early stages, to their sectional demands. As a result of the successful struggles, these organizations have become real mass organizations, and new organizations have grown throughout the country. Although the organizational consolidation lags far behind the possibilities, trade unions and Kisan Sabhas have gained tremendous accession of strength. During the course of struggles, the united front relations have been developed with the local Congress Committees, resulting in the radicalization of Congressmen, and bringing the class and Congress organizations nearer. Nevertheless, the general position remains that in the course of these struggles the Congress organization and Congress masses have not been very extensively drawn, nor have we been able

to swing over the masses in the class organizations to any great extent towards political problems and the National Congress. Even in regard to the sectional demands, after the first concessions regarding the old glaring grievances were gained, we have, due to organizational and political weakness, failed to come forward with positive plans of action, which we could popularize, and force the ministries to implement them.

During this period the States Peoples' movement began in almost all the States, in spite of the policy of non-intervention. The movement gained momentum and drew the entire States' people into the struggle, preparing the ground for real nation-wide offensive against imperialism and its allies. The discontent is deep and the response of the masses is great, thereby guaranteeing the success of the movement; but it is still organizationally very weak, generally depending for its strength upon the middle class elements. The workers and peasants, when they have come forward to participate in the struggle, have done so in the form of elemental actions rather than as an organized force. Even extensive agitation for the workers and peasants' demands is generally lacking, with the result that the struggles could be confined to narrow issues and could even be suspended.

Widespread Radicalization

The Congress has gained the greatest accession of strength, becoming a net-work of organized units throughout the country commanding the loyalty of the whole nation. The campaigns for the extension of civil liberties and the release of political prisoners, the extensive struggles of the masses for their partial demands often drawing in the Congressmen, the States Peoples' movement and the popularization of the programme of struggle by the left, have resulted in widespread radicalization of the Congress ranks. It has found expression in the Congress Committees being unofficially drawn into struggles, and in their putting pressure on the Congress Ministries in the interests of the masses. Its highest indication was the election of Subhas Bose as President in opposition to the wishes of the dominant leadership. This process has gone so far as to be a great weight in favour of struggle. Yet there are limitations to it, in so far as it is still a vague sensing towards the necessity of militant struggle, still largely unorganized and unconscious of the implications of the programme of struggle, still not drawn fully into the day-to-day work amongst the masses, organizing and participating in their struggles.

Compromising Tendencies at Work

Despite the restrictive efforts of the Right, the result of the working of the Congress Ministries has been a tremendous development of the forces of struggle both in extension and strength embracing far wider sections than ever before. The base of the rightist compromising leadership has thus been narrowed. Even within the national leadership the compromising elements have lost in strength. This diminishing core of extreme Right, together with the Ministries, still thinks in terms of merely putting pressure upon imperialism. After the first stage of the ministerial period, the pace of ministerial action in favour of mass demands slackened, because of the fact that the mass organizations due to their organizational and political weakness, could not keep up constant pressure upon the Ministries. They failed to make the turn in favour of constructive plans after the first outstanding pressing demands were satisfied. They also failed to mobilize the Congress ranks whose pressure is most effective upon the Ministries. On the other hand the reactionary opposition outside the Congress had widely organized itself, and the reformist elements inside the Congress began their outcry in favour of the national bourgeoisie interest (e.g. social legislation was approved as being unbearable burden on industry and so on). Under these circumstances began the second period of ministerial working, when the pressing needs of the masses were not being taken in

hand, no positive comprehensive scheme of ameliorating the condition of the people is being taken up, not even the old repressive laws on the Statute Book are being repealed. Bourgeoisie which has gained some concessions as a result of the acceptance of offices, (Government controlled insurance, Government contracts and such aid to industries) because of the lack of sufficient pressure from the masses, was able to exercise its full influence upon the Congress Right and the Ministries. The Congress Working Committee tackled such problems as ratio, foreign investment, national planning etc., and the ministerial work got a twist in the direction of settling down to explore avenues at profitable investment for the Bourgeoisie and long-scale planning for providing opportunities to them, neglecting in the meanwhile even the most urgent grievances of the people which have been pressing hard upon them. In the efforts to restrain the masses, ministries even came forward with avowedly reactionary measures (increasing use of Sec. 144, arrests of Kisan and labour workers etc.) and even initiated anti-mass and anti-struggle legislative proposals (Trade Disputes Act, Congress-Zamindari Agreement in Bihar). The Right wing leadership in an effort to stave off the pressure of the masses even proposed curtailment of Civil Liberties (Delhi AICC resolution). Relying upon the support of a section of the Congress and camouflaging another, on the basis of danger of violence, the Right has also proposed purging of the Congress in an attempt to isolate the Left and to prevent further shifting of the Congress ranks towards radicalism.

Thus the Right wing section attempts to utilize these forces of struggles only for the purpose of putting pressure upon imperialism as a part of its bargaining policy. The main conflict between the compromising and the revolutionary trends continues, but on quite a different plane. The strength of the revolutionary forces is far greater than before and is constantly growing, so that the leadership is constantly forced to react to their demands and has at times even to lend its support to them (Gandhiji's support to States. Tripuri resolutions on States and National Demand, release of political prisoners in non-Congress provinces). The development of these forces is narrowing the scope of its compromising tactics, although because of its base in the Congress and the weakness of the Left, it is not able to draw in the entire Congress into struggles; it is still in a position to super-impose, though with far greater difficulty, these tactics of compromise and resist the demand of consciously co-ordinating and developing the struggle against Imperialism.

Right Wing Needs Mass Support

However, the Right wing cannot afford to lose its mass support. In order to be able to use the Ministries for extending the opportunities in favour of the national bourgeoisie, as also for using the entire national movement for bringing pressure upon Imperialism, the support of the masses is the only weapon and as such the Right can never isolate itself from them. No superficial concessions from Imperialism which isolate the bourgeoisie from the masses are worth anything if they deprive it of the very instrument through which concessions can be retained and extended. The vacillation of the Right is due to this factor. For, while it would like concessions and compromise, it would at the same time, like to have them without losing the support of the masses. Today as a result of the radicalization of the national ranks, and the demand for a consistent struggle against Imperialism, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Right to compromise without losing mass support. It is making frantic efforts to hoodwink the masses into supporting it, raising all sorts of irrelevant and false issues, like the danger of violence, unpreparedness of the masses, to bamboozle the ranks into allowing it to have the deal. Tripuri made it clear that the Right does not hope to get a majority in its favour on a straight question of policy. It has to manoeuvre a majority on the basis of personal loyalties. In the measure we mobilize the masses for struggle, and they begin to insist upon consistent fight against Imperialism, it is made impossible for the masses to be hoodwinked

by irrelevant issues, we will succeed in pressing upon the Right to give up its capitulatory policy, and forcing it to be a part of the fighting anti-imperialist front. This tendency to compromise and capitulate is being off-set by the development of mass forces. Our further development of these forces will make capitulation impossible, and forge the fighting front of the entire people. The conflict between revolutionary and compromising trends within the national front will have to be solved in favour of a revolutionary struggle on the basis of a united nation. This is the immediate perspective which determines our task and role at the present moment.

Liquidate the Second Period

The situation already discloses certain signs of the second period drawing to a close. Under greater pressure of the Left as indicated by the election of Subhas, and as a result of the development of the States Peoples' movement which was meeting with increased offensive from Imperialism and the increasing discontent in the Congress ranks against the policies of the Congress Ministries, the National leadership had to accept at Tripuri, resolutions on States and the National Demand which are indications of this—viz., they provide the programmatic basis for the Left to decisively turn the Congress as a whole in favour of a policy of struggle. With regard to the States the possibility of the increasing identification of the Congress with the States Peoples' is opened. Similarly in connection with the National Demand the acceptance that (1) 'the capacity for good (of Provincial Autonomy) is being rapidly exhausted', and that (2) 'with a view to a speedy realization of the Congress objective, and in order to face effectively the national and international crises that looms ahead' to call upon the Congress and the people, (3) and 'to prepare the country for a nationwide struggle' concede the main features of the programme, the working of which can enable the Left to liquidate the second period and bring about a turn in favour of a fighting policy.

The subsequent developments have once again shown that the Right would not carry out in actual practice what it may, under force of circumstances, accept in words—suspension of the States Peoples' movement, lack of any propaganda on the National Demand resolution during the National Week. It is only the initiative and the work of the Left in mobilizing the Congress for this programme that will enable its being implemented. Tripuri Congress has shown that inspite of the narrowing mass basis of the Right and the increasing radicalization of the ranks, it is still in a position to isolate the Left from the middle masses of the Congress. It is winning over of these elements to carry out the necessary preparations for launching a fight for the National Demand, for the immediate partial struggles of the masses, for positive schemes of ameliorating the material conditions of the people, for organizing the masses for the coming struggle, that constitutes the specific link in our immediate task of being able to swing over the entire Congress in favour of the policy of struggle. Our main stress is the immediate future lies in winning over these elements. And for this purpose we must talk in a language intelligible to them, we must take in hand such concrete tasks and struggles as will draw them in and must be able to convince them of every step that we take. The most important consideration in this respect is that they can grow over their present hesitation and confusion through their own experience by participation in partial struggles. Hence the supreme necessity that, while constantly explaining our point of view, we must come forward to initiate concrete struggles and campaigns, draw these elements into them so as to win them over decisively to a policy of consistent struggle, and thus turn the scale so predominately in favour of the revolutionary trend as to completely bar the way to the capitulatory tendency of the Right.

The Tasks

For being able to successfully accomplish this task, the unity of the Socialists and of the entire Left is the most effective lever. Hence the necessity of Socialists unity and Left unity in order to achieve national unity through struggle and for the final offensive.

The tasks for the immediate future therefore become the following:

Struggle on Two Fronts

Politically the supreme task is that of pushing the Congress to the path of struggle while maintaining its unity. The task becomes of greater importance now because the Right in its attempt to harness the immensely developed revolutionary forces to its own policy may take desperate means in order to prevent the further development of the Left. The pretext of planning to root out corruption from the Congress, to resort to purge and insist upon confining the Congress to a narrow band of satyagrahis, is an indication of this tendency.

The danger also becomes greater because imperialism, faced with an ever increasing war danger, will be making desperate attempts to disrupt the national forces by attempting to win over the national reformists. Attempts will be made to terrify them by branding the Left and its vanguard, the Communists, as forces of violence, anarchy and chaos.

However, while disruption from the Right continues to be the main danger for the national front as a whole, the greatest and the specific danger of the period within the ranks of the Left comes from the disruptive provocative tactics of the ultra-Left sectarians. Basing themselves on an exaggerated notion of the radicalization of the national ranks, and under-estimating the progressive capacity of the Right, they are likely to turn to provocative tactics of fighting to overthrow the Right. Already we see this tendency making its ominous appearance. By their disruptive tactics they will help the Right in preventing the middle masses of the Congress from passing over to the Left point of view. There will be numerous opportunities for this because of the disruptive attempts from the small diminishing core of the Right. To fall a prey to the disruption of the Right is exactly the method of enabling them to retain their mass basis, thereby preventing the possibility of winning over the united forces of the nation to the struggle against Imperialism. It objectively amounts to the same results which Imperialism is frantically attempting to bring about, by its policy of trying to disrupt the national front. Today to make the Right as the target of attack instead of Imperialism, to concentrate the fire on the Right instead of concentrating on winning over the middle elements to the point of view of struggle, is to help the compromising tendency of the Right, without counter-acting it. It is thus a gratuitous gift to imperialism in the form of helping it to wean away the reformists with their mass basis to itself. It is the line of complete disruption, the line of giving up the fight for realizing the revolutionary possibilities of the specific situation today, when the entire national forces, including the national reformist bourgeoisie, can be won over to struggle against imperialism.

‘Alternative Leadership’ Theory

In this connection we must deal with the theory of ‘alternative leadership’, the theory of fighting for a ‘consciously revolutionary leadership as a precondition of the revolutionary struggle’ on the part of the Congress. Its immediate implications are to make the ideological struggle against the Right as the specific task of the present period. Revolutionary leadership can develop in the course of a fight for revolutionary struggle, and in working for this struggle, it will come to lead the movement. A consciously revolutionary leadership therefore can become the leader of the national movement during the course of the struggle for revolution. To speak of a consciously revolutionary leadership coming into existence as a precondition of such struggle, springing as it were from

nowhere and being installed into leadership by a magic wand, can only be the dream of romanticist babblers and talkers and not of serious revolutionaries. In the specific conditions of the present, implying as the theory does, the struggle to fight and throw out the Right from the Congress, it is the slogan of disruption, preventing the growing over of the middle masses to the Congress from their confusion, and passing to the view of struggle. It is helping the Right in confusing these centrist elements to think as if the Left were fighting to disrupt the united front and not for winning over of the Congress to struggle. In its immediate day-to-day practice the theory therefore is disruptive and inverted Rightism preventing the mobilization of the Congress by the Left.

It is giving up the tactics of united National Front and is giving up the task of forcing the national bourgeoisie to be part of the united nation in opposition to imperialism. It is giving up the task of realizing the immediate revolutionary perspective, which the present conditions of the imperialist world and the class alignment of the national situation enable us to realize. The theory therefore becomes a bar to the realization of the immediate perspective for revolution and of preventing the development of revolutionary leadership. Hence is the necessity of carrying on a consistent theoretical and practical struggle against the mechanical theory of 'alternative leadership'. It becomes an important task of the serious revolutionaries who want to fight for revolution and revolutionary leadership not merely in words but in actual practice.

While we must fight the danger of the ultra-Left sectarians in our own ranks the struggle against the Right disruptionists has by no means come to an end. The specific feature of the present situation is that while the Left has gained the sympathies of the centre, it has been able to radicalize them to some extent only, but it is not yet in a position to decisively win over the centrist elements. Hence it is that the Right disruptors will try to confuse the issues, attempt to prevent the passing over of these elements to the Left and come forward with disruptive proposals.

Similarly it is necessary to guard against opportunist deviation in our own ranks. The need to fight for unity in the Congress does not imply submitting to the opportunism of the Right. We certainly do not want unity only to hand over the entire national forces to the compromising Right. Unity cannot therefore mean unity for compromise, it means unity through struggle and for struggle. Our fight for unity therefore necessitates the keeping straight to the line of struggle. Unity implies accepting a common objective and accepting and working for the immediate practical steps for achieving that objective. Unity demands that all the elements inside the Congress must agree to work for the practical steps necessary to reach the objective embodied in the Congress programme. In fighting for unity in the Congress, the Left must take the initiative in working the immediate practical steps at every stage, must convince the Congress ranks of the necessity of fighting for these immediate steps. And thus through struggles based on cementing a real abiding unity of the national forces, not merely on distant common objective, but on common understanding, should we work out the immediate tasks to reach that objective.

The New Technique

The basic feature of the fight for unity and of the struggle against opportunism today consists neither in shouting for abstract unity, nor in attempting to fight on abstract ideological plans. The middle masses will be gained over by the Left by enabling them to grow over through their own experience of struggles. It is the winning over of these elements that will finally turn the scales in favour of the forces of struggle, and put a complete stop to the opportunist deviations of the Right top. While continuing our educative role in explaining the objective and technique of national struggle, and concretely applying it to the day-to-day problems, it is our immediate task to win the middle elements to struggle, and not enter into an abstract ideological combat with the Right to settle theoretical accounts. Hence the specific method of fighting against opportunism and for

unity today is to take the initiative in formulating the immediate concrete practical steps in the interests of the movement, to agitate for the same extensively in the entire Congress ranks, explaining them as necessary for the development of the movement, and thus draw the Congress into struggles for these concrete tasks. It is this practical working out of the immediate steps in the form of positive plans, and popularizing them and initiating struggles for them, that will enable us to become the builders of the united national front; and not our shouting, however loud, about the inactivity, failures or ideological obscurantism of the Right wing and the Ministries. The understanding and practice of this new technique of work in the conditions of today, will go a long way in enabling the Left to play its proper role in the development of the national struggle.

The Sharp Bolshevik Line

In short, we may conclude that politically the line of fighting for pushing the united Congress to struggle, through numerous partial struggles, is a sharp Bolshevik line dictated by the needs of the revolution, avoiding, on the one hand, the Right opportunist mistakes and on the other, ultra-Left disruption; and it is this line alone that will enable us to make the next forward move in the National movement, viz. the one of swinging-over the masses decisively in favour of revolutionary struggle.

The happenings at Tripuri found the entire Left and even the Socialists almost non-plussed. Very often we meet with the argument that the Right is adamant, that it is not taking the initiative and hence the difficulties in making any advance. After the first period of ministerial working, when the masses began a wave of struggles, we have again lost the initiative. We could not make the turn decisively in formulating positive plans, and pressing for the same.

Now is the time for local and unofficial initiative. Such initiative will prepare the ground for broader initiative on a national scale. Those who will wait for initiative to come officially from the Congress, or from the national leadership which is still predominantly Right, may have to wait for ever. It is exactly the other way about; by means of initiative in starting partial struggles we will prepare for the national struggle. By unofficial initiative in co-ordinating and centralizing them we will be preparing for official centralization by the Congress. On behalf of the Left, the Trade Unions and the Kisan Sabhas, representing as they do, the most conscious and militant section of the national forces, we must take the initiative in formulating definite schemes in the interests of the masses, we must mobilize the Congress for them on local, district and provincial scales, and every such step will be a forward move in the direction of the entire Congress for nation-wide struggle.

In other words this task amounts to developing the initiative of the masses both in the independent organizations and the Congress to such an extent that once the masses are on the move, no power can check them; by their movement they force the leadership to move as well. The centrist elements which do not know the strength of the masses, do not have faith in the revolutionary capacities of the people, submit to the compromising tactics of the Right, because they think the masses are not prepared for struggle. Develop the initiative of the masses, and show them in their revolutionary action, then we will be able to win over the centrists to full-fledged mass action. It is we, the Left who have roots in the masses, know them, and are capable of mobilizing them. Because we have faith in the revolutionary capacity of the people, it is our task to mobilize the masses into political action. We must find ways and means to do so in spite of all the difficulties from the Right. Once we succeed in doing this, it will bring its own reward by achieving the fighting united front and revolutionary struggle.

Tasks Regarding Class Organizations

The result of the past developments of the class organizations is (1) extensive mobilization of the masses drawing in the strata of the backward masses, (2) a sense of self confidence amongst them, and their growing awakening and interest in political questions, (3) development of the organizational strength of these organizations, which lags far behind the objective possibilities, and (4) the mobilization in the past has generally been for class sectional demands and not for general political demands.

From these arise our tasks in the immediate future. Organizationally the consolidation of the masses in these organizations must be brought up to the fullest possibilities. The cause of the present lag consists in our still being in the agitational stage, where one or two individuals continue to be the centre of organizations, and they are so overworked as to be unable to take in hand the task of consolidation. The key to this weakness lies in the failure to train up fresh cadres from the militant activists thrown up by the movement. Because we have not laid enough emphasis on this, only a few individuals are theoretically and organizationally equipped to be entrusted with the work of responsibility. So the organizations continue to be under-manned. Only training up fresh cadres from the masses in the essential political and organizational tasks will remove the lag. In this connection the work of preparing a course of study for these cadres must be taken in hand which will deal with the immediate political problems, the agitational and organizational tasks and will thus help to increase the organizational consolidation on all the fronts of the national movement. The further development of the class organizations necessitates our being able to make the turn in favour of formulating and popularizing the positive demands of the masses. In the past there have been failures even in actually realizing the concessions formally gained by the people. In this connection, it is necessary to emphasize that the juridical formal rights gained for the people, have to be carried from the Statute Book to the fields and factories. We must take initiative in doing so, even organizing struggles whenever necessary to beat down the opposition of the reactionary vested interests to the actual realization of these rights. But the further implementing of the programme, in the interests of the masses, requires a formulation of the constructive schemes for satisfying the positive demands of the people, like the right of recognition of the Organizations, Social Insurance, Labour Exchanges, Tenancy Legislation, cheap rural credit, schemes of rural sanitation, medical relief, etc. Our greater theoretical equipment must express itself in formulating such sound schemes in the interests of the masses. Our revolutionary initiative must enable us to organize intense agitation and campaigns in favour of these schemes, winning over not only the classes concerned but the entire democratic people, thus through the joint pressure of the democratic masses to make their implementing possible.

Not merely such positive schemes must be formulated for the class sectional demands of the masses, but the Left and the class organizations must take the initiative in formulating the general political demands, like the repeal of repressive legislation, limitation of Sec. 144, democratization of local self-government institutions, curtailing the powers of the police, and even demanding the change of the lower administrative organs from the present bureaucratic one to a democratic one (e.g. land records to be maintained by an elected Panchayat, the District Magistrate to be under the control of an elected Peoples Committee etc.). It is the working for such positive demands, a progressive realization of which will completely exhaust the possibilities of the Congress Ministries, at which stage an attack upon the Slave Constitution becomes inevitable.

Work up the Congress

However, the most urgent task in this connection is the necessity of bringing over the masses in the independent organizations into working the Congress. The development up to the present has

been very deficient in this respect. The isolation of the masses in the independent organizations, has resulted in the lack of political effectiveness of these organizations on the one hand, and the slow rate of the radicalization of the Congress, on the other.

The bringing over of the masses in the independent organizations to the Congress does not merely mean enrolling them as members of the Congress. It must signify the carrying on of the day-to-day work on behalf of the Congress. This implies that we should take the lead in initiating an intensive agitation for practical schemes to fulfill the Congress programme, agitational campaigns on political problems, and struggles on behalf of the various sections of the people, thus making the Congress unite the live mass organizations fighting for the entire interests of the people. In doing this, the masses in the class organizations must be drawn, so that we will be able to work up the Congress effectively and quickly. These class organizations must become the lever of moving the Congress and making it a day-to-day functioning organization, leading every struggle in the locality. Thus alone will it be possible to get the support of the Congress for every sectional demand of the people, and the support of the masses organized in the independent organizations for every programme of the Congress transforming the local Congress into United Front Units.

In this connection, we must settle accounts with the theory often put forth that we must first develop class organizations, after which only the time would come for working up the Congress. The objective result of the stand is economism, for it means that for the present the workers and the peasants should confine themselves to their sectional demands only and must not participate in political work, the most important part of which consists in carrying out the Congress programme through the Congress. On the other hand, it leaves the Congress safe in the hands of the Right, this continuing its mass basis to be able to play its compromising role. Besides, such a theory is harmful even to the development of the class organizations. Because organizations arise and gain in strength through struggles. In order to gain success in struggles, it is necessary to get the support of the entire democratic masses for the demands of every section, which can be had only through working up the Congress. Hence our keeping aloof from the Congress is objectively sabotaging the full development of the class organizations themselves. Mobilizing the support of the Congress for every struggle of the people, mobilizing the entire masses for the programme of the Congress, will prepare them for success both in getting their immediate demands fulfilled, and for the final struggle against imperialism.

Hegemony of the Proletariat

This theory is supposed to be a stand in favour of emphasizing the independent role of the working class and peasantry. It however turns out to be quite the reverse. The fight for the hegemony of the proletariat consists in its coming out as the builder of the united front, in its being able to take the initiative in mobilizing the entire democratic masses behind it. In the conditions obtaining today, the struggle for proletarian hegemony lies in making the Trade Unions and Kisan Sabhas take the initiative in mobilizing the Congress. The working class and the peasantry must not only move themselves, but must be able to put in motion other sections of the masses. By keeping the workers' and peasants' organizations away from the Congress we are preventing this process and sabotaging the working class from coming to its own in the national struggle. The needs of the situation demand that the working class and peasant organizations must constantly come forward to initiate new campaigns, new programmes, fresh schemes to organize the Congress in the new direction, as democratic units heading and developing the struggles of the people. Thus we will give a new form of organization to the Congress, give it our technique of mobilizing and fighting for mass demands, and establish proletarian hegemony in practice, not merely in words as those who would insist upon its being established as a precondition of revolutionary struggles.

We should take initiative in forming on behalf of the Congress, trained Volunteer Corps—Volunteers who will not merely be trained to maintain discipline, but who will be effective propagandists of the Congress, who will become the most effective cadres in agitating and organizing struggles on the basis of the Congress programme, thus creating that effective corps which will be able to hurl the entire nation against Imperialism.

Political General Strike

In this connection we must deal with the political strike and country-wide non-payment of taxes, the specific weapons of the working class and the peasantry in the national struggle. The first thing to be emphasized in this connection is that these cannot come about simply by declarations, a whole series of political, agitational and organizational preparations are needed for these actions. The preparations have to be done both amongst the working class and peasantry for these actions, as also amongst the other sections of the people to get support to these actions. It is only when the entire nation has come to accept these weapons as a necessary part of struggle, that the working class and peasantry will really respond to the call of the nation, and will in turn receive the support from the entire nation.

As a preparation for these weapons to be used, the first necessity is to draw the workers and peasants intensively into political tasks and anti-imperialist struggles. It is only through organized agitation for the demands of the people and connecting them with political tasks, through explanation of every political development to them, through bringing them to participate in every political, agitation, that we will prepare them for the next step. The greatest weakness in this respect today is (1) our not having drawn these masses effectively into political struggles yet and (2) our not having been able to co-ordinate and centralize the working class and peasant organizations either on national or even on provincial scale. Both these tasks must be immediately taken in hand in order to prepare the ground for effective action on behalf of workers and peasants in the coming national struggle. Mobilizing the Congress on the basis of the strength of the organized workers and peasants and the Left will establish the proletarian hegemony in the national struggle thus guaranteeing its success.

The tasks above outlined regarding the national movement will decisively win over the Congress masses to struggle, thus finally putting a stop to the compromising tendencies of the Right. Their fulfillment will be able to develop the fighting unity of the people, will prepare the grounds for a nation-wide offensive, and enable us to realize the immediate revolutionary perspective. We are on the eve of great struggles. We can play a decisive role in them. With the determination of serious revolutionaries, let us engage ourselves in these tasks so as to leave nothing to chance, and success will be ours.

61. On the Forward Bloc: Subhas Chandra Bose

‘Socialists and Forward Bloc’, *Hindu*, 17 May 1939 and *Bombay Chronicle*, 17 May 1939.

16 May 1939

Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, addressing the Provincial Youth League last evening at Makur (Unnao district) made an appeal to the people to join his Forward Bloc and thus radicalize the Congress and prepare the country for the fight for independence. Mr Bose narrated the events that occurred in his re-election to the Congress Presidentship till the Calcutta session of the AICC and said that all his attempts at a compromise with the Rightists did prove abortive. He added that, if he had resigned just after the Tripuri Congress, as was suggested by some of his friends and in some

newspapers, it might have been construed as a personal affair, but his correspondence with Gandhiji had now made the issues clearer and the people could judge things in the proper perspective.

Mr Bose said the correspondence showed that Gandhiji had no fighting programme for the near future. It revealed that Gandhi, in the event of a war, would prefer to further the cause of the country's freedom by negotiations with the British Government to any other means. He differed from Gandhiji on that score. He thought that the country should be prepared for giving fight to the British Government, as, according to him, the time was now most opportune for it, particularly in view of the international situation.

Mr Bose regretted the Socialist Party's decision not to join the Forward Bloc but hoped that its leaders would give permission to the members of the Party to join the Bloc; otherwise the Party would be weakened, for some of its members were bound to come over to his bloc and thus weaken the Party.

'We cannot get Swaraj through constitutional means as some Congressmen have begun to think and until Swaraj has been achieved, none of our major problems could be solved,' declared Mr Bose addressing another youth conference. He added that after the acceptance of office by the Congress, the revolutionary urge in Congress Ministers was dying out and election promises remained unredeemed yet. His Forward Bloc would radicalize the Congress and help in developing the revolutionary mentality.

Mr Bose disapproved of Gandhiji's policy regarding States and thought that even if, through Gandhiji's or any outside agency's intervention, the States' peoples got self-government, they would not be able to enjoy it for long, due to lack of training. India was one indivisible unit and the fight in the States should be treated as part of one fight for freedom.

Mr Bose (adds the Associated Press) referred to the policy of inaction and drift adopted by the old group at Congress leaders. Replying to his critics, he said that his opponents had declared that there was no atmosphere for non-co-operation and that there were dissensions, indiscipline and corruption in the Congress organization and that violence seemed to have increased in the country. But, said Mr Bose, the fact was that they had lost the revolutionary mentality which had so far been supreme in them. After a lapse of two years of constitutional struggle, they wanted to follow the same much-beaten track of constitutional agitation whose futility had often been exposed from the press and the platform. 'The infusion of new blood,' he added, 'would not remain a mere noble idea but would be a reality. Veterans should either lead and march with the times or make room for those who wanted to give the right lead.'

The Muslim League, Mr Bose said, had recently gained much power and, though communal, it had rendered real service to the country by creating, consciousness among the masses. This consciousness could be utilized by the Congress if it started a genuine economic and political fight with imperialist forces. Bose regretted that two years of acceptance of office should have curbed their revolutionary mentality and degenerated them, necessitating the formation of a new party to march with the times.



62. Refusal of Passport to P.C. Joshi: S.H. Zaheer to Local Governments and Administrations, 19 May 1939

Home Department, Miscellaneous Series, GO No. 3078, 3 June 1939, Tamilnad State Archives, Madras.

Subject: Refusal of passport facilities to Mr Puran Chandra Joshi

Sir,

I am directed to say that at the instance of the Government of India, Home Department, this Government have refused the grant of a passport to Mr Puran Chandra Joshi, a resident of Mohalla Jhijar, Almora, as he is reported to be a communist.

2. A copy of his particulars as given in his application form is appended.

GO No. 3078, Dated 3 June 1939. Home Department

Particulars of Mr Puran Chandra Joshi,

Almora, as given in his application form:

Age	– 31
Profession	– Journalist
Domicile of ordinary place of residence	– The Jhijar, Almora
Place and date of Birth	– Almora, 14 April, 1907
Height	– 5 feet 5 inches
Colour of eyes	– Dark brown
Colour of hair	– Black
Visible distinguishing marks	– Mole on the chin and mole on left ear-lobe

63. 'Why CSP Does Not Join Forward Bloc': Jayaprakash Narayan

Congress Socialist, 21 May 1939

21 May 1939

Interviewed about the Forward Bloc and the policy of the Congress Socialist Party, Jayaprakash Narayan, General Secretary of the All India Congress Socialist party, said that he had not much to say about the 'Bloc' at this stage. His party has, as already reported, decided not to join the 'Bloc'. The Party, however, he added, would not oppose it and would co-operate with it to the extent it agreed with its policies.

Asked for the reasons leading his Party to decide against joining the 'Bloc', Jayaprakash said that the Party had always been against any organizational crystallization of the Left Wing which would only check its growth and lead to a struggle for power within the Congress.

'The perusal of the statement of the policy of the "Forward Bloc" made by Subhas Babu', he continued, 'makes it clear that it has no policies other than those of the Congress as a whole, except opposition to what has become the common fashion to call "High Command". Such opposition can hardly be the policy of the Congress Socialist Party. The only things the party is opposed to at present are imperialism and its Indian allies. If the purpose is to get the policies of the Congress implemented, the Party would much rather appeal to all Congressmen than only to those who choose to form Blocs and Leagues.

'The Party thinks it is not wise to divide Congressmen as Congressmen into groups. This might sound queer coming from the party. But the Party by bringing socialist Congressmen together has not divided Congressmen as such. The Congress Socialists have objectives that go beyond

those of the Congress and as such, they have formed a party for their achievement. In as much as their objectives are common with the Congress, they work within it and with other Congressmen. For the achievements of their objectives, they do not wish to divide Congressmen any further.

‘Their policy has always been to press forward the Congress as a whole. This they can do not by forming “Blocs”, but by their political initiative and action.’

64. Gandhi versus Bose: The Fundamental Differences

Independent India, 21 May 1939.

21 May 1939

The correspondence between Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose, which was published last Sunday, throws a flood of light on the points that were at issue between the two wings of the Congress during the last four months. The points at issue were never clearly realized by either of the two wings and more particularly by the Left-wing which has been more intent on mystifying rather than on clarifying of them. But the logic of events is too strong for either of them and despite the wishful thinking of the conciliators the points of difference are emerging in clearer and clearer form as days go by.

Gandhiji has been very explicit in the correspondence. In each and every letter he has talked of the ‘fundamental differences’ between him and his followers on the one hand and Subhas Babu and his supporters on the other....

It is a pity Gandhiji has not cared to specify in clear terms the ‘fundamental differences’ which he talks and which rendered it impossible for him to agree to any of the various suggestions made to him by Subhas Babu. It must be said to the credit of Gandhiji that these ‘fundamental differences’ have not been a sudden discovery for him. He has been talking about them consistently since the result of the presidential election and basing his and his followers’ actions on the recognition of those differences. In view of this and Gandhiji’s categorical declaration, it is futile to refuse to recognize them. Refusal to recognise them will not exercise them out of existence. It will only lead to confusion of thought and consequent indecisiveness of action. It will be better for both the wings and more helpful to the development of the national movement if the differences are recognized and policies adjusted accordingly.

We have from the very beginning disapproved of the frantic efforts of some ‘Leftists’ to convince the Right-wing that there were no points of fundamental difference between it and the Left-wing. We were of the opinion that the Right-wing cannot be so easily deceived and apprehended that those efforts would lead to self-deception and demoralization of the Left forces in the country. What happened at Tripuri and subsequently at Calcutta has proved that our opinion as well as apprehension were well founded. Gandhiji’s emphatic declaration that we cannot meet on the political platform has now knocked the bottom out of those well-meaning but disastrous efforts of the conciliators. We sympathize with them for their frustrated efforts, though as political realists we had no illusions about their success.

Gandhiji has not enlightened us regarding the nature of the ‘fundamental differences’ that exist between his school of thought and the Left-wingers in the Congress. But they can be easily inferred from his political stand which has been stated in clear terms in the correspondence... in reply to the impassioned appeals of Subhas Babu for an early resumption of the struggle. The same old arguments of the absence of a non-violent atmosphere and the presence of corruption in the Congress are repeated in justification of the refusal to countenance a mass movement. Subhas Babu’s cogent reply that the resumption of the struggle would be the best antidote against corruption could not carry conviction to the Mahatma. Nor could the dilemma whether insistence on a

perfect atmosphere of non-violence as a condition precedent for the resumption of the struggle would altogether rule out the possibility of a struggle or not move the head or the heart of Gandhiji. These are arguments which would appeal to every person to whom the interests of the struggle predominate over every thing else, but not to those who subordinate the political goal of independence to the abstract concept of non-violence. And that is the essential difference between the Gandhian school and those who stand for national independence.

The fundamental difference between Gandhiji and Subhas Babu seems therefore to be this, that while the latter demands in pursuance of the Congress resolutions and as dictated by the objective circumstances, an early resumption of the national struggle for independence, the former puts down his foot heavily upon it under the specious excuse of violence and corruption. It does not seem to strike Gandhiji or make any material difference to him that this attitude adopted by him is in direct contravention of the Congress resolutions and policy. He is concerned more with his ethical ideas and political philosophy which is based on the conception of a gradual transfer of power. Considered in the light of his political philosophy there is nothing inconsistent in the stand taken by him. The difficulty is that faith in that philosophy is not shared with him by the revolutionary elements in the Congress as it runs counter to the political programme of the Congress and the objective strivings of the Indian people. The fundamental differences of which Gandhiji speaks in the correspondence flow from that contradiction between Gandhiji's philosophy of life and the political ends of the National Revolutionary movement. The differences can be liquidated only by an acceptance of that philosophy by the movement, an acceptance which will lead it into the backwaters of futile reformism and discredited constitutionalism.

The Congress has been long dominated by that reactionary philosophy. The needs of the developing movement are bringing it into conflict with that philosophy. Subhas Babu objectively though inadequately represented the needs of that movement. The conflict between the two is irreconcilable, the differences between the two are fundamental. The movement can progress and develop revolutionary potentialities only by rejecting that philosophy, popularly known as Gandhism, which is today dominating and controlling the Congress. No amount of wishful thinking can do away with that fundamental difference and the conflict between the objective needs of the Congress and the subjective predilections and prejudices of its leaders.

65. League of Radical Congressmen and Forward Bloc¹

M.N. Roy Papers, Subject File No. 3; Part 1(2), 1936–40, NMML.

23 May 1939

'As members of the League of Radical Congressmen which has come into existence with the specific purpose of organizing the revolutionary elements in the Congress, we cannot but welcome and support every endeavour to organize the Left-wingers in the Congress. We regard the "Forward Bloc" as a step in that direction and as such heartily welcome it.

'But what has been stated by Subhas Babu regarding the policy and programme of the "Forward Bloc" has given rise to certain misgivings in our minds. We have been particularly distressed by Subhas Babu's declaration that he unreservedly accepts Gandhism and the Gandhian programme of non-violent non-co-operation as the only means of achieving independence.

'We are emphatically of the opinion that this stand is entirely wrong and cannot be the ideological basis of any real Left-wing organization. A close study of the national movement and of the policy and practice of Gandhism has convinced us that it is Gandhism which is at the root of the constitutionalism and authoritarianism dominating the Congress today. It is wrong to separate

Mahatma Gandhi from his ardent and faithful followers like Sardar Patel and Babu Rajendra Prasad, and to seek to destroy the latter's influence while paying homage to the former.

'We are convinced that the policy and practices of the Gandhian leaders follow directly from the principles and programme of Gandhism, and if the former are wrong, the root, of the error is in the latter which must be unreservedly rejected by those who wish to break with the present day neo-constitutionalist, reformist, and authoritarian tendencies in the Congress. A fight against these tendencies can proceed only on the basis of total rejection of Gandhism, which today governs all actions of the Congress leaders.

'The Congress has during the last 20 years followed the philosophy of Gandhism. In his early days, action based on that philosophy was of great help to the Congress. But now the Congress has reached a stage in which that philosophy no more serves any useful purpose. It does, on the other hand, hinder, and render impossible further healthy development of the national movement. It is therefore, necessary to reject it and substitute it by the philosophy of revolutionary nationalism. It is necessary to replace the present Gandhian leadership of the Congress by a new leadership owing allegiance to the philosophy of revolutionary nationalism. Any attempt to organize a Left-Wing in the Congress must be based on a clear recognition of this necessity. A failure to recognize it and the tendency to shirk a struggle against Gandhism, have been responsible for the miserable results achieved so far in the direction of Left-Wing organization. The debacle of the Left-Wingers at Tripuri and the collapse of the Leftist supporters of Subhas Babu, can be directly attributed to this ideological confusion.

'We regret to find that Subhas Babu has not taken any clear ideological stand. We are glad, however, to find some clarification in his Unnao speech. We trust that when the programme of that "Bloc" comes to be finally drafted, all this ideological confusion will be cleared away, and the programme will be based on the rejection of Gandhism, acceptance of the philosophy of revolutionary nationalism, and the need for the rise of a new leadership in the Congress. Unless that is done, the "Forward Bloc" may degenerate into a faction fight against the present leaders of the Congress. Such a faction fight will in no way help either the Left-Wingers or the Congress as a whole. If that happens, the "Forward Bloc" can have no support or sympathy from us. But we trust such a development will not take place, and that the "Forward Bloc" will bring together all the Left-Wingers in the Congress in the struggle:

1. For the democratization and radicalization of the Congress;
2. For resolute action in pursuance of the Congress resolutions and for the attainment of the political programme of the Congress; and
3. For the evolution of the new revolutionary leadership of the Congress.

'In that case, the League of Radical Congressmen shall be always glad and willing to co-operate with the "Forward Bloc" for the transformation of the Congress into a revolutionary people's party.

'Reports received from other provinces show that local organizations of the League are taking up a similar sympathetic attitude towards the "Forward Bloc". The general policy of the League on this question has still to be formulated. It will very largely depend on the development of the "Forward Bloc". If it pursues a definitely Left policy there will be no objection of the League to acting as one of its constituents on concrete issues. This question will be discussed and finally decided in the All-India Conference of the League which will take place at Poona at the time of the coming AICC meeting.'

¹ On May 22nd, a meeting of Left-Wing Congressmen took place in Bombay under the Chairmanship of Mr K.F. Nariman to consider the proposal for the formation of the Forward Bloc. The local League of Radical Congressmen was invited, and the above declaration was made on behalf of the League.

66. Nehru on the Formation of the Forward Bloc

Speech at Kanpur, 23 May 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 10, p. 574.

23 May 1939

I do not approve of the formation of the Forward Bloc. I, therefore, do not attach much importance to it. Although I would like to allow certain latitude to the people who hold different views to form their own organization, I consider it improper to weaken the great organization like the Congress by the formation of separate groups. In any active organization, there would be differences of opinion, but these differences must not be confused with personalities. Such a course would not be in the interests of the country.

There is an awakening among the Muslim masses but they do not understand the problems of the country and are misdirected by the Muslim League.

67. Release of Political Prisoners: Letter Written from the Rawalpindi Jail, Prithvi Singh to Rajendra Prasad, 27 May 1939

AICC Papers, File No. G-46, NMML.

My dear Shriman Babu Rajendra Prasadji,

I have read your speech delivered at Tripuri (regarding) the release of political prisoners. I am thankful to you for the earnest attention that you are giving to the pressing problem. Mahatmaji, in his own way, in a concrete manner made a serious attempt to secure the release of the p.ps [political prisoners] in Bengal but the issue has proved too heavy for the efforts of an individual however great.

In response to your call the day of 21st May was observed for the release of the politicals. From the press reports I have gathered that the approach was made in a general manner. Concrete problems demand concrete approach. Terrorism, all over the world had a historical phase, and the radical change that has dawned upon our youths is a historical growth, it has nothing to do with the mental make up of particular individuals. In spite of the change that has come, it is a cruel thing to allow our youths to wither away behind the bars and to make serious attempt at the eleventh hour to secure their release when they are reduced to a bundle of skeletons, and become the depository of so many diseases when they lose all charm for living and become a burden to their nearest and dearest ones.

Personally I have nothing to desire and no complaint to make. I have come to take my abode behind the bars at my own choice and have no objection to stay as long as the leadership of the nation (and) the persons in power [illegible] it desirable, but I like to draw your attention towards the lot of the p.ps in Punjab.

The Congress camp in Punjab is divided against itself and it has many problems of its own creation to tackle. Under the circumstances, if the Congress members in Punjab are left to themselves, then nothing can be expected from them. The nationalist press in Punjab is equally indifferent to the fate of the politicals of the province. I am getting four dailies of the province. *Tribune*, *Inqilab*, *Vir Bharat*, *Khalsa Sewak*. All the four papers have attached no particular significance to the demand for the release of the political prisoners in Punjab. *Tribune* is the only paper of some repute which represents balanced views, but it has kept mum re. the release of the p.ps of the province. In the issue of the late morning edition of the 25th May in an editorial note there is a sweeping reference made on the problem and no mention is made at all about the release of the Punjab political prisoners. As if there are no political prisoners in Punjab jails.

All these four dailies are vehemently indignant against the Punjab ministry on the communal issues, but they have no mind to draw the attention of the Punjab Government towards the solution of a pressing problem. I like to draw your attention towards the fact that amongst the politicals in Punjab jails, there are not many persons who commands great influence and wider social contacts, hence they are left to themselves. I am inclined to believe, that the Punjab Government will not have the slightest objection to release the politicals of the province, provided needful assurance is given on behalf of the prisoners by responsible persons of political importance. The Government which has the generosity and courage to release revolutionaries like Batukeshwar Dutt and Rajkumar Sinha, will not refuse to show leniency towards the rest who are waiting and counting their days in despair.

A Concrete Suggestion

In the nearest future please find an opportunity to come to Punjab to have a talk with the Honourable Premier and the Honourable Finance Minister. Permission should be procured for the responsible Congress members in the Assembly to go and have interview with the political prisoners in jails to ascertain their views, and then stand guarantee for their non-violent approach towards the political problems of the province after their release.

I hope you will find time to give due consideration to my request, and earn the blessings of those who are yearning to be free to serve the nation under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi.

With *pranams* at your feet.

Yours most obediently,

68. Government Ban on the Communist Party of India¹

K.M. Munshi Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 29, File No. 43/2, NMML.

29 May 1939

1. In 1934 the Communist Party of India, its committees, sub-committees and branches were declared unlawful associations under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, on the ground that they constituted a danger to the public peace.

2. The reasons for this action were that the Meerut Conspiracy Case had proved that the Communist Party in India was a revolutionary Party with the professed object of overthrowing the existing order of society and bringing about independence by means of a violent revolution, seeking to secure this object by mass revolutionary action, strikes, demonstrations, etc. culminating in a general strike and armed insurrection. Subsequent events showed that the Meerut Case had not caused more than a temporary setback to Communist plans in India. Evidence accumulated to show that the Communist Party had been reformed on a new and more ambitious scale and that attempts were again being made by Communists in various parts of India to secure control over workers' organizations, and to organize a combined workers' and peasants' revolutionary movement under Communist leadership. In view of these facts the Central Government recognized the necessity of taking action not only against the Communist Party, but also against its subsidiary organizations.

3. Govt's intention was to give a lead in declaring war on communism in India, root and branch, and to show to the country that there was no intention of temporizing with the forces of Communism. This lead was one which a large body of public opinion in India—by no means confined to those with conservative political views—already alarmed at the Communist programme, though no mere narrow-minded prejudice against new ideas and rival political theories, welcomed

and showed itself glad to follow! There are good reasons for believing that this policy can claim equal if not greater support in India today.

4. Govt recognized that apart from its psychological effect, the ban would act as a deterrent in obstructing and impeding Communist activity in India, forcing it underground and thereby prevent it from developing into the open mass revolutionary movement which Communism in its later stages aims to achieve. It was in fact not so much the immediate activities of the Communists as their ultimate object, which led to the Communist Party being declared unlawful. In this connection the question of permanent legislation was considered but rejected as being impracticable. It was felt that proscription would be no less permanent, and would render prosecutions—in the event of the movement succeeding and developing into mass movement—less protracted than under the ordinary law, that is, Section 120-BIPC, according to which any person subscribing to the aims and objects of the Communist Party is in theory guilty of an offence, but for the insuperable practical difficulties which make it well nigh impossible to secure a conviction. In brief, the ban was imposed because experience had shown that the ordinary law was inadequate to control Communist activity in India, and because proscription was considered to be more warranted by the circumstances than special legislation.

5. The ban has achieved its purpose of preventing communism in India from spreading into an organized mass movement, without having recourse to frequent and protracted criminal proceedings. Despite the growth of left-wing opinion in political India and repeated attempts by individual Communist leaders to advance their cause through ‘united front’ tactics, taking every advantage of the ideals and commitments of Congress in their efforts to ride to victory on the back of Congress Socialism, the Communist Party has as a result of the ban been largely disorganized and its policies discredited. Unchecked, these efforts might well have menaced the peace and prosperity of India.

6. Events have clearly shown there can be no relenting from the original reasons for imposing the ban, on the grounds that these were only temporary causes. It is not necessary to quote from secret information to show that despite the Communist leaders’ attempts to create an atmosphere in which the Communist Party may be regarded as a level organization, no longer consisting of international revolutionaries but patriotic nationalists, their designs remain unaltered and are—to quote the recent words of one Minister—‘to use the Congress for their own ends, which are nothing short of the complete destruction of the existing social and economic system in the interests of what they are pleased to call Communism’. The issue cannot be better stated than it was by the Home Minister in Bombay two months ago, when replying to the debate on the general strike organized by Communists in Bombay in November last,

It is not between Congress and anti-Congress. It is not between one party and another. It is between those who want an orderly adjustment of political opinions and those who want to use violence to overawe their opponents. It is an issue between democracy and political gangsterdom.

7. Withdrawal of the ban at the present or any future stage, would be tantamount to a truce with the forces of Communism in India against which Govt declared war in unequivocal terms in the notification of 1934. It is significant that the Bombay Govt recently declared officially that it was ‘not in the public interest’ to recommend to the Central Govt the lifting of the ban.

The Madras Govt in issuing a warning to the public last year against becoming unwittingly involved in the Communist movement, described Communism as being ‘wholly opposed to the culture and traditions of India’. The Central Govt’s ban on the Communist Party as well as the Sea Customs Act notification against the importation of Communist propaganda into India, are designed to protect the ignorant masses in India from being misled by these evil influences.

Communism is not only a creed: it is a plan of campaign. The method of enforcement is as much a part of the Communist faith as the doctrine itself...

Recently £ 50 a month is being contributed from England towards the expenses of the *National Front*, the organ of the Communist Party. Moneys have also been received in connection with the Kanpur strike.

The Communist Party of India is now functioning and District Committees are appointed at Bombay, Ahmedabad, Poona and Sholapur.

After the VII World Congress, under instructions from the centre, the Communist Party gave up its sectarian and isolationist tactics and adopted the policy of entering all existing organizations. Pursuant to these instructions the party liquidated all sectarian organizations and joined the existing organizations like the Congress, CSP, the Trade Union and the Kisan organization, the Youth and Student organizations.

The various activities of the Communist carried on in the Trade Union and Peasant fields in the name of the Congress Election Manifesto has opened the eyes of the Conservative Congressmen to the dangers ahead and they have therefore decided to cleanse the Augean stables under the whip-hand of discipline. The process has already started and if the amendments to the constitution suggested by Gandhi in the recent Working Committee meeting are adopted at the Tripuri Congress, it is more than certain that the Communists will have to face a serious defeat on their much cherished anti-imperialist front.

The Communists also fore see this calamity and they have therefore started the slogan of entire left unity.

The instructions to the CPI come through the GB, Communist Party (Great Britain). In the latter part of 1938 about Rs 20,000 were received in Bombay.

The Communist Party of India want to recognize the Indian National Congress as the only Anti-Imperialist front in India and accept the slogan of 'Constituent Assembly' as the pre-condition for the establishment of the Socialist Soviet Republic.

On the 19th of November 1938 it was decided not to have anything to do with Ambedkar.

¹ This is a note prepared by the Intelligence Bureau for K.M. Munshi, the Home Minister in the Bombay Government.

69. Release of Rani Guidallo of the Nagas

AICC Papers, File No. P-4/1938-39, NMML.

Letter of dated 30 May 1939 from Mrs Sarala Bala Dev, Vice President, Sylhet DCC and Secretary, Sylhet Mahila Sangha, to the General Secretary AICC appealing for early release of Rani Guidallo.¹

'I interviewed Rani Guidallo of the Nagas in Shillong Jail. Her heroic conduct during the Civil Disobedience Movement is too well-known to need recapitulation. Attached please find a statement which I have issued to the press of my interview. She being a resident of Excluded Areas, her release lies in the hand of the Government of India. I, therefore, appeal to Working Committee through you to move the matter of her early release...'

Sarla Bala Dev

Rani Guidallo in Solitary Confinement 'When Shall I Be Released'

Smt. Saralabala Deb, Vice-president, Sylhet District Congress Committee and Secretary, Sylhet Mahila Sangha, who interviewed Rani Guidallo in the Shillong Jail, has issued the following statement:

'In pursuance of the resolution adopted at the Surma Valley Women's Conference I interviewed the Hon'ble Judicial Minister Mr Kamini Kumar Sen in connection with the release of Rani Guidallo, on the All India Political Prisoners day (21st May). I learnt from him that the Assam Government had done nothing beyond recommending the release of the Rani along with all other Political Prisoners of Assam to the Government of India in whose hand her release lies, she being a resident of the Excluded Areas. It is not within the competence of the Provincial Government to move in the matter.

'I insisted on the Hon'ble Minister to release the Rani conditionally, pending the decision of the Government of India and place her in custody of the Sylhet Mahila Sangha. He advised me to make a petition to the effect with a copy of the resolution adopted at the Women's Conference to the Government of India through the local Government. The Sylhet Mahila Sangha is acting accordingly.

Interview with the Rani

'WITH the usual permission I then interviewed the Rani in the Jail where she is a third class prisoner, confined in solitary cell, although under the present Ministry the jail diet has much improved. She ought to be classed as political prisoner and receive facilities as such for reading and writing.

'The Rani is about 20 years now. Her longing for education, of which she has almost none, is intense. Solitary confinement has made her timid. At first she declined to talk to me but when I gave her my credentials as a Congress worker her face beamed with delight. After a good deal of persuasion she sat beside me. In the presence of the Jailor her talk was halting and low. Besides her native tongue, Naga, she has a smattering of Assamese, but I am innocent of both. So our talk which was a heart to heart communion, went on, for the most part of the half an hour's interview, by signs.

'The Rani told me that in observance of a tribal religious custom she fasted for a month taking only fruits and milk. Her meal generally consists of rice by day and bread by night.

Will Join Mahila Sangha

'Guidallo earnestly asked me when she would be released. I narrated to her my talk with the Minister. I assured her that the Working Committee would be approached to try for her early release. I enquired of her if she would be agreeable to live under the custody of the Mahila Sangha, should she be released conditionally. Not only did she agree but also promised to join the Mahila Sangha whenever she would be set free.

'Every year her brother comes to and resides at Shillong for some time when he is given facilities to interview her four or five times. The rest of the year she has to plough her lonely furrow in the prison cell. If she continues longer in such a condition, I am afraid, she will lose her power of articulation. Otherwise, she is keeping good health.'

¹ Rani Guidallo was an accomplice of Jadunung who had set up an anti-British cult among the Kacha Nagas, and incited their youth to commit depredations against the British officials and their local collaborators. Although Jadunung was captured by the British police subsequently and punished, the Rani managed to escape, evoked popular sympathy and succeeded in evading arrest in the Naga Hills for two years. She was finally arrested by the 3rd Assam Rifles, tried, and given a life imprisonment. Later on the Rani was released on condition of her abstention from politics, and was granted a small monthly pension.

70. Satyamurti on the Forward Bloc

Article, *Hindustan Times*, 30 May 1939.

30 May 1939

It is not realized in our country by all our countrymen and Congressmen as much as it should be that we are fighting for the freedom of our country against resourceful and unscrupulous enemies, both external and internal. The Indian National Congress is the only secular all-India political organization fighting for the freedom of the country. It has a fine record 52 years of work, disinterestedly done for the freedom of the country by the best brains and best hearts of the country. Long stages have been reached on the road to freedom but longer stages still remain to be traversed. Under circumstances, it is the clear duty of all patriotic Indian men and women to strengthen the hands of the Indian National Congress and to do nothing to weaken.

As for differences of opinion on particular items of the programme which the Congress may place before the country from year to year or from time to time, there is ample scope within the Indian National Congress for such differences being settled by discussion and then either by agreement or by a majority vote as in all well ordered democracies. In spite of what our enemies and some friends may say, the Congress is the most democratic organization in the country. Any person of 18 years and above is entitled to become a member of the Indian National Congress and all bodies which direct Congress policies or work are elected directly or indirectly by these members except the Congress Working Committee which is nominated by the President who is, however, elected directly by the delegates, and even the Working Committee holds office only subject to the approval of the All India Congress Committee, the members of which are directly elected by all the delegates at each session of the Congress. It is, therefore, open to Congressmen and women who have ideas and who may not agree with the opinion of the Congress programme to propagate those ideas and try to convert the majority of the Congress to their viewpoint. It is, of course, subject to two big limitations. The first is that all Congressmen must accept with all its full implications the Congress doctrine of non-violence for achieving Purna Swaraj, according to the creed of the Indian National Congress. Only legitimate and peaceful means can be used for this purpose. Secondly, while it is the right of every individual Congressman to educate his fellow countrymen in his ideas and ideologies with a view to converting the country and the Congress to his view, it is always inherent in a democratic organization that while it is the right of the minority to try to convert itself by all legitimate and peaceful means into a majority, so long as it is not a majority, it must abide by the decisions of the majority in all its actions and policy pursued by the Congress in general and by Congressmen in particular.

This leads one to the question at the method by which Congressmen may be educated or sought to be converted to one view or another, subject to the above limitations. I am strongly and emphatically of opinion that no Congressman should be permitted or should permit himself to form parties, groups or blocs within the Congress or outside the Congress for this purpose. It may be asked how, then, are they to influence the decisions of the majority in the Congress. It is perfectly easy for them to do so, provided their ideas are sound, practicable and acceptable to the Congress and the country by sheer propaganda, and by thus educating the people of the country to accept their policies and their programmes. But to form themselves into a party for this purpose weakens the parent organization, creates a conflict between the majority party and the so-called minority party and retards the good work of the Congress in the country for the freedom of the country.

I have always been and still am of the opinion that no member of a Congress committee should be a member of any other political organization. The Congress constitution already provides

that no member of the Congress should be a member of any communal organization whose objects are inconsistent with the object of the Congress. Speaking for myself, I should be glad if we have a rule that no member of the Congress shall belong to any other political organization. But it may be too drastic a step and I am, therefore, content for the time being with a provision that no member of any Congress committee, elected thereto by the votes of his fellow Congressmen—whether it be Village or Tahsil Congress Committee, or District Congress Committee, or Provincial Congress Committee or the All India Congress Committee—shall join any other political organization. This is obvious, but this thing has been permitted for some time and, therefore, it requires some thought and consideration before it is accepted by all Congressmen. I do sincerely hope and trust that when the Congress constitution is revised, as it is going to be very soon, this change will be incorporated.

The question is often asked whether the Swaraj Party formed by the late Deshbandhu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan and many others is not a precedent for the formation of the parties. My answer is two-fold. Times and conditions have considerably changed and today the Congress is engaged in a grim struggle for the freedom of the country. The general lines of the Congress programme have been laid down and have proved, so far successful. Such changes as formation of parties, groups or blocs within the Congress, as now desired by some, is more a question of emphasis than a question of policy or programme. Even the Forward Bloc of Subhas Chandra Bose has no positive programme. Only they mouth the words of revolutionary mentality as if it is something peculiar to them. Moreover, the Swaraj Party was formed for a specific ad-hoc purpose that is, of persuading the Congress to accept the parliamentary programme, and was dissolved within a few months after its formation when this purpose was achieved. Again let them not forget that Mahatma Gandhi was then in prison, when the Non-co-operation movement had been only inaugurated for three years, and the country did not understand the full implications of the non-co-operation programme. Now that the non-cooperation programme includes both parliamentary and extra parliamentary activities, there is no question of principle or programme on which the formation of parties is necessary.

Last but not least I would suggest that even if, logically speaking, the formation of the All India Swaraj Party may be argued as a precedent for the formation at other parties it cannot be a valid precedent under different circumstances. It is therefore, to be earnestly hoped that those who promote these parties, blocs or groups within the Congress will realize, before it is too late, that they are doing something against the interests of the country whatever their intentions or motives may be.

The Congress Socialist Party has been allowed to function for some time as a Congress Party. It has been encouraged in some ways by leading Congressmen. I think it is time that party ceases to exist as a Congress Socialist Party. It is not that I can or do object, to Socialist ideas or ideology being propagated in the country. It is perfectly open to them to preach those ideas. But I say that for the present when our struggle is concentrated on the achievement of full independence of this country, we cannot afford the luxury of dividing our forces. But by all means, if we attain the freedom of our country, let there be political Parties in the country based on particular political or economic programmes and let the democracy of our country decide. Meantime we should not divide ourselves. If, however certain politicians who are disgruntled want feel that the only way for them to wreak their vengeance on persons whom they consider as enemies is to adopt, these fissiparous methods, I sincerely appeal to my fellow Congressmen and fellow countrymen definitely to discourage the formation of those parties and tell them that the Congress today is the most potent instrument for attaining the freedom of this country, and that we should all work together as men of the Congress under Gandhian leadership, to which I see no alternative.

III. UP TO 9 JULY DEMONSTRATION

71. The Crisis Deepens

New Age, Vol. 6, No. 1, June 1939.

June 1939

With lightning rapidity events have moved since the fateful 29th of January when the Presidential election took place and today we are faced with a situation of extreme seriousness and gravity. No longer is it possible to shut our eyes to realities, no longer can any Congressman—whatever be his affiliations—look upon the developments complacently with the hope that somehow or other the tangle would be solved, misunderstandings removed and unity maintained, with the hope that the present period of drift and retreat would soon end and the nation given marching orders. Whatever basis for such hopes existed they have now been smashed. And if the nation is not to find itself disunited and unprepared when the crisis comes, if the Congress is to fulfil its historic role of achieving national freedom, it is time that realities are faced and the basic causes of our present weakness and disunity removed.

The war-crisis dominates the situation. With the destruction of Spanish Independence, with the annihilation of Czechoslovakia, with British Imperialism abetting Nazi and Fascist aggression till the Axis powers have attained immense strength and dominating positions in Central and Southern Europe, the danger of war has increased a thousand-fold. The armament race is fast approaching its final and decisive phase. The second imperialist war, as Stalin points out in his Report to the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, has already begun. It is now only a question of months—or may be weeks—for a world conflagration to start.

In the background of this fast-maturing war crisis the recent development in the Congress and the country—developments that conclusively and overwhelmingly prove the disruptive character of the present policy of our national leadership—acquire tremendous importance. Shall the Congress because of the attempts of the national leadership to pursue a more and more anti-popular and anti-struggle line and because of the ever-sharpening internal conflict that such attempt must result in—go to pieces and be unable to meet the war-crisis or shall we achieve internal unity and foil imperialist attempts to drag us into war? This is the question that the present situation poses. On the answer to this question depends the fate of our nation.

Never was the situation so critical, never the possibilities of complete victory and also the danger of utter defeat, so great. Whether our efforts are crowned with success in the near future and the shackles of slavery broken or whether a glorious opportunity is wasted, depend entirely on the policy that we adopt today.

What that policy must be, has to be determined with full consciousness of the present strategy of British Imperialism in relation to India. The strain of war-measures is forcing imperialism to shift the burden more on the Indian people. The Indo-British Trade Pact which was ratified in spite of the adverse verdict of the Central Legislature, the enhancement of the import duty on Cotton, the persistent refusal to grant protection to growing industries, are only a few instances. Simultaneously with this offensive in the economic field, new chains of slavery are being forged and every effort is being made to overcome Princely opposition to the Federation by more and more concessions, the scanty powers that provincial Ministries enjoy today are being sought to be restricted in order that Britain's war machine may function without hindrance. The rapid mechanization of the Indian Army, the move to establish gun factories in India, the plan to convert India into Britain's war base for the entire Middle and Far East, the war Amendment to the

Government of India Act, are all parts of Britain's war plan. All these mean a general offensive against the entire Indian people on all fronts—Political and Economic.

At the same time Imperialism is fully conscious of the need for Indian 'co-operation'. While the needs of war drive Imperialism into conflict with Indian national interests, this very need also forces it to make gestures of conciliation—gestures which are however empty because imperialism can not afford today to make any vital concession, political or economic. Imperialism wants conciliation with our national leaders but at its own price, without foregoing its autocratic powers, without sacrificing the interests of British Finance Capital, without alienating the Princes and other reactionary vested interests that constitute its main props.

Can we say that the line that our national leadership is following is such as would defeat the strategy of imperialism and frustrate imperialist plans to drag India into a war? Are our leaders conscious that imperialism today can not make any vital concessions—any concessions that cut across its own political and economic interests—cannot destroy its own base and alienate the Princes by acting as the champion of the States people, cannot weaken its offensive against the people as a whole, cannot give up the game of instigating communalist disruption and that therefore all hopes of gradual transfer of power have to be given up and the nation prepared for struggle?

If this consciousness, this perspective determined the policy of our national leadership the history of the last one year and particularly of the months following the Presidential Election, would have been radically different, the struggle of the States People would have been strengthened, the internal crisis of the Congress solved in a manner which would have strengthened the national movement as a whole, and the Congress would have achieved complete internal unity and become powerful enough to take full advantage of the impending war crisis.

That did not happen. Subhas Bose's election was followed by the resignation of the Working Committee members and Gandhiji's statement: 'It is my defeat'—a statement which was in fact a declaration of war. What was in reality the rank and file verdict against the policy of drift, against the suppression of working class, peasant and popular struggles in the name of truth and non-violence, the rank and file protest against the destruction of internal democracy of the Congress, was interpreted as lack of confidence in Gandhiji and in the Old Guard, as repudiation of the fundamental principles of the Congress. Helped to a certain extent by some 'Leftists' who too raised slogans of 'alternative leadership', the compromisers at Tripuri side-tracked the main political and organizational issues, posed Gandhiji against Subhas and prepared the basis for complete organizational domination in the Congress.

What happened at Calcutta was not an accident, nor the result of 'misunderstanding' in the Working Committee. The obduracy, the cussedness on the part of the Right Wing leaders, the insistence on a homogeneous Working Committee were not born of a false sense of 'prestige' as some comrades seem to think. Nor did Subhas Bose, Jawaharlal, Jayaprakash Narayan and the major section of the Left plead for a united Working Committee, for a composite cabinet, only because they wanted more Left members in the Working Committee. The differences were deeper.

Political reasons—two entirely different perspectives—lay at the root of the difference that manifested themselves at Tripuri and at Calcutta. The slogan of homogeneous Cabinet was counterpoised to that of composite cabinet because the dominant section of our national leadership had an entirely different notion of unity from what Bose and Nehru had. In contrast with the latter who thought in terms of struggle and wanted unity for launching struggle, the Right Wing leaders too wanted unity but for a different purpose and with different perspective.

That perspective rules out struggle and is based on the illusion that power can pass into the hands of the people gradually and without struggle. The Right Wing point of view was expressed by Sardar Patel in a speech delivered shortly after the AICC session.

‘Discord and disharmony may prove our undoing. That is why Mahatma Gandhi has been saying that the Working Committee of the Congress... must be homogeneous both in spirit and action.’

‘If we work our machine in the right spirit and manner we shall be able to conquer power even without struggle.’

The very heart of reformist is laid bare in these statements, the real meaning of the slogan of homogeneous cabinet—its political content—becomes crystal clear. In view of the imminence of the war-crisis, in view of the certainty that imperialism shall strive to drag India into war, ‘power without struggle’ can only mean compromise with imperialism. And in order that this line may be carried out, in order that no rift takes place in the supreme Executive of the Congress in the period of the crisis, in order that maximum pressure may be brought on imperialism as a part of the bargaining policy—a homogeneous cabinet is a necessity. This perspective determined the Right Wing line at Tripuri and Calcutta. A homogeneous cabinet was established, the elected President was forced to resign, in order that the anti-struggle line might be pursued without hindrance in order that the rank and file verdict in the presidential election might be reversed, in order that the Congress will be transformed into an instrument—not for nation-wide struggle as the National Demand resolution demanded, but for bringing pressure on imperialism for bargaining with it. This line demands liquidation of even the existing struggles. No wonder that the British Imperialist Press hailed the Calcutta verdict with joy, no wonder Zamindars of UP and Behar breathed a sigh of relief.

What the logical implication of this line is, can be seen most clearly in the development on the States People’s front. The year 1938 saw the entry of 80 million States People in the political arena. Princely autocracy, one of the mightiest pillars of imperialism, was shaken up to its very foundation; undreamt of possibilities opened up for an all-embracing, nation-wide offensive against imperialism. Kashmir, Travancore, Mysore, Dhenkenal became storm centres of popular struggle. And when crisis over the happenings in Rajkot and Jaipur seemed imminent, the nation waited with bated breath for the marching order, joyfully hoping that the period of drift and retreat had come to an end, that the entire might of the Congress would be hurled against imperialism.

Then came in rapid succession Gandhiji’s Rajkot fast, the assurance by the Viceroy, the Viceroy’s advice to the Princes ‘to put their houses in order’ and Gandhiji’s halting orders. Precisely at the moment when the movement had attained greater strength than ever before, when Princely autocracy was hardest pressed, Gandhiji ordered the people to beat a retreat. The specious pleas that were advanced for this unprecedented slip were that ‘the princes were themselves agitated over the awakening of the people, that they should be given breathing time and that the Viceroy’s message to the Princes should be allowed to work itself.’

How the Princes viewed the suspension, how they wanted to utilize the ‘breathing space’, were immediately seen. Relieved from popular pressure, they organized the forces of disruption and launched the counter-offensive. Communalists were encouraged and popular ranks were divided, people were deliberately provoked into acts of violence, terror was continued. Ramdurg and Gangpur witnessed mass shooting of unarmed peasants, in Cutch the national Flag was burnt, thousands were forced to flee from Limbdi to escape the terror, in Travancore and Bhavanagar hooligans were encouraged to break popular meetings and demonstrations. In Jaipur, inspite of the withdrawal of struggle, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and other political workers were kept in prison and subjected to inhuman treatment—in brief almost in every state repression was intensified. Above all, in Rajkot, Gandhiji was completely outmanoeuvred. Autocracy which had been forced to retreat before the united might of the people returned to the attack, organized communalist disruptors used the fruit of people’s struggle—the Gwyer Award—to defeat Gandhiji.

In the face of this counter-offensive our national leadership retreated step by step, victory was turned into defeat and defeat was sought to be covered up by sanctimonious phrases about 'change of heart', truth and non-violence. The inexorable logic of the policy of compromise worked itself out, the accredited leader of the nation was beaten down to his knees by a petty Princeling.

It is not on the States People's front alone that reaction has been on the offensive. Gandhiji's attempts to secure the release of Bengal political prisoners by means of negotiation have failed and the failure was officially recognized by the Congress. In the Punjab hundreds of peasants are being thrown into prison for agitating against increase in revenue. In Bengal the reactionary Huq Government by means of the Municipal Amendment Bill is attempting to fan up communal passions and ensure reactionary domination over the Calcutta Corporation. Communal riots are breaking out on large scale in UP, Behar, Bombay—all Congress Provinces and it is obvious to all that they are part of a general attack on the Congress and its Ministries. The Bombay and Cawnpore Mill owners are attempting to nullify the wage increase which the Congress Ministry, backed up by the people, had forced them to concede. The brutal firing on unarmed workers at Digboi, a firing that was universally condemned by the Congressmen of Assam, was upheld by the Magistrate who conducted the enquiry and the European owners frustrated every attempt of the Congress Ministry to negotiate a settlement with the strikers. Hundreds of peasants are being ejected from their land in favour of the landlords with the direct support of the Frontier Congress Government and for organizing opposition to this, scores of Red Shirts including Obeidullah, the son of the Frontier Premier, have been thrown in prison. Disciplinary action by the Congress has followed and they have been removed from their offices in the Congress.

As in States, this offensive of reaction is not being met with by the people's counter-offensive. Everywhere the line of compromise is being followed on every front; the dominant policy is that of retreat. The growing offensive against the Left, the offensive that is taking the form of 'purification' of the Congress, of disciplinary measures and of destruction of democracy in the Congress, is the necessary counterpart of the compromising policy.

Homogeneous Working Committee is to be followed by an AICC packed with supporters of the present leadership. Proportional representation is to be done away with. The internal democracy of the Congress is to be severely restricted in order that the rank and file discontent may be easily smothered by the application of disciplinary measures from the top. That is the meaning of the new amendments to the Congress Constitution that are sought to be introduced in the near future.

Inability on the part of the Left to turn the tide, to win over the majority of the Congressmen definitely and decisively for the policy of struggle, inability to defeat the disruptive policy of the Right Wing, inevitably creates a situation in which Left adventurism thrives, in which slogans of 'Down with Gandhism' and of 'alternative leadership' evoke response, and unscrupulous elements get the opportunity to utilize the discontent of the rank and file for factional struggle against the Right Wing, or to be more correct, against the existing leadership.

It is in this background—the impending menace of war, the growing offensive of reaction, the anti-struggle and therefore anti-unity line of our national leadership, the drive against the Left, the growth of Left adventurism—that the post-Calcutta developments in the Congress have to be analysed. The emergence of the Forward Bloc with Subhas Bose at its head is a factor of extreme significance and importance. The fact that this Bloc, admittedly a product of Left discontent, is led by the ex-President, emphasizes the depth of the crisis in the national leadership and gives the Bloc an importance and attracting power which it otherwise would not have. Already large number of Left Congressmen have hailed the Bloc and in the Punjab and UP the preliminary steps for forming it have been taken. According to Bose 'the two-fold task of the Forward Bloc shall be:

firstly to instill life and revolutionary impulse in the existing programme of the Congress and secondly to prepare the country for the coming struggle through an advance radical programme.'

The Bloc stands for struggle, for uncompromising opposition to the Federation and war, for close relationship of the Congress with workers' and peasants' organizations, for direct leadership of the Congress in States People's movements, for the creation of a national volunteer corps, for rapid implementing of the Congress programme by the Ministries. Its programme therefore is identical with the immediate programme of Communists and Socialists.

Nevertheless the heterogeneous composition of the Bloc, the existence of a number of persons in it who can by no stretch of imagination be called Left but who are only disgruntled Right Wingers, the absence of ideological homogeneity are factors which render it not unlikely that the Bloc may tend to become ally of factional consolidation against the present leadership, utilizing every deviation, every mistake, every anti-struggle and anti-unity act of the present leadership in order to discredit it. That will deepen the internal crisis, weaken the Congress and the unity that it has achieved.

This is not an unfounded apprehension. A recent speech of Bose himself in which he said that 'split may be necessary' shows the extent of the danger which the Congress and the national movement are faced with as a result of the recent developments. The Forward Bloc is essentially a Left nationalist body and as such a healthy development. But not to realize that the desperation and sense of frustration produced in the Left camp by Right obduracy may flow into disruptive channels would be blinding ourselves.

Our national movement has reached an extremely critical stage. Never was the need for unity greater and never too the danger of disruption greater. That unity can be achieved, that danger averted only if the entire Left unite and use its strength, which is far greater today than ever before, not to wage factional struggle against the Right or to advocate a suicidal split, but to defeat the policy of drift and disruption, to mobilize support of the Congress organizations and masses for the partial struggles of workers and peasants in defence of their economic and political rights, to organize vigorous agitation in the Congress organizations particularly among the primary members for support to the States People's and against suspension of their movement, to create mass opinion in favour of the anti-war policy of the Congress so that that policy may be actually carried out when the crisis comes, to mobilize widest support for purification of the Congress without weakening its mass basis—in brief to fight for the policy of unity and struggle concretely and positively and on a political plane by developing mass political consciousness, by making the issues of the day live to millions of Congressmen.

And for achieving this unity the Socialists, Communists and the Forward Bloc and other radicals must immediately meet and chalk out a common plan of action by mutual agreement. In order that this unity may be really effective, the major political and organizational slogans and the approach to the burning problems of the day must be common. Maintenance of the unity of the Congress and its strengthening as the organ of the united people's movement must be the basic task of the United Left. And in order that disruption may not develop in the Left camp itself, it is absolutely necessary that one section does not try to gain at the expense of the other, that all agreements are voluntary and strictly adhered to, that the parties to Left unity may maintain their independence and integrity.

These are the immediate tasks today. In the measure we fulfil these tasks we shall be able to prevent disruption, to prevent compromise on the issue of war, strengthen the Congress and take the nation forward.



72. Forward Bloc and Left Unity¹*Searchlight*, 9 June 1939.*Patna*
7 June 1939

A stalemate continues in our struggles for freedom since Tripuri, Calcutta has only worsened the situation. The crisis in the national leadership has deepened. The Tripuri resolution which gave the call for a nation-wide struggle remains a dead letter. Rajkot has cast a gloom over the States' people's struggle. On the other hand, imperialism and the forces of reaction are on the offensive. Witness for instance the recent amendment of the Government of India Act, the war preparations of imperialism in India, the Indo-British Pact forced upon the country in the teeth of unanimous national opposition and the all too frequent communal riots. This is where the policy of drift unfortunately persisted in by the old leadership and the tragic events of the past few months have led us. The task of every Congressman, irrespective of labels, and of every Congress organization, is, clear. We make bold to say so in spite of the utter confusion that prevails. Congress policy itself is definite and unambiguous. In view of this definite policy it is the task of every Congressman and every Congress organization to undertake immediately active resistance to all war plans and activities in India and to prepare the Congress and the country for the impending struggle. The Tripuri resolution on the national demand must be converted from a dead letter into powerful lever for moving the whole nation onward to its declared goal. The present stalemate must be ended. All Congressmen who agree with this view must join hands, not in opposition to the others, but in order to give effect to this policy.

The important question is how many all such Congressmen join hands and be able to co-ordinate their activities. Clearly, among them will be people who hold different political views, who belong to different political groupings and parties. All these come together on the platform of the Congress. They may not be willing to do so on any other platform. Yet, it is essential, if the next step forward has to be taken, for them all to pool their efforts and unify their policies.

Attempts are being made to accomplish this task in exclusive and sectarian ways. That, to our mind, would only result in an end just the contrary of what we desire. While such a consolidation of what, for want of a better word, may be termed the Left forces in the Congress, is an urgent need of the hour. We must be careful that an ill-conceived attempt at it does not result in creating new barriers within these forces, or lead to a factional conflict between them and the other forces in the national movement.

We feel constrained to say that the present move for the formation of a Forward Bloc, would not lead to such a consolidation as we desire. This consolidation cannot be conceived of as an opposition party to those in power. The Congress is not a parliament where opposing parties must try to oust one another from power. It is a front, the unity of which must not be impaired. In our opinion a consolidation of the Left forces must be based on the voluntary cooperation and co-ordination of all the Left groups, parties and individuals and on a common and united programme and policy jointly discussed and evolved. Further the policies of such a consolidation should aim at embracing and drawing together as wide section of the Congress as possible and ultimately of moving the whole Congress onward to a struggle. The Forward Bloc does not fulfil these conditions, nor the manner in which it is being organized conduces to the kind of consolidation we have in mind.

We, therefore, suggest that as a first step towards such a consolidation a consultative conference should be called at the time of forthcoming meeting of the AICC in Bombay of representatives of all the existing Left groups and all such Congressmen as agree with the twofold aim of preparing

for a nation-wide struggle and resisting the war measures of imperialism. The purpose of this conference shall be to devise a machinery for Left consolidation and to arrive at a common policy and programme of work.

Two questions remain. First, what should be the machinery of consolidation and, second, what should its policy and programme be?

Regarding the latter, we believe that the policy must be non-sectarian and non-factional. That is today, it must aim at maintaining the unity of the Congress and at achieving a united leadership that would move the entire forces of the nation against imperialism. It should make it clear that what is aimed at is not an anti-Right bloc but united working of all the forces within the Congress which are opposed to constitutionalism and the policy of drift and which stand for concrete and immediate preparation for struggle and resistance to war in a manner that would succeed ultimately in moving the entire Congress. The programme of the consolidation should include the implementing of the National Demand and anti-war and anti-fascist resolutions of the Congress, development of the States peoples struggle as part of the fight against federation, pressure to secure the implementing of the Congress election programme, co-operation with the struggle and organization of the workers and peasants, fight against communal reaction. Finally, the programme must include as one of its most important items and the democratization of the Congress, elimination of corruption and opportunism from it and the counteracting of the tendency in certain quarters to disrupt it by driving out the socialists and communists.

As for the machinery or the organizational form of the Left consolidation, it must be such that it does not result in the formation of a rigid organization or a new party. It should make possible effective and expeditious co-operation of all the Left forces without in any way preventing their independent functioning and curtailing their initiative. Its decisions must be based on agreement and not on counting of votes. We, therefore, suggest that at the conference which we have proposed, an All India Left co-ordination Committee should be formed with representatives from each of the existing Left groups and parties and a certain number of prominent Congressmen who agree with the objects of the consolidation. The Committee shall enroll no members and shall have no provincial and district branches.

In the end we appeal to all those who agree with our aims to co-operate in preventing split and disruption and in laying a foundation for the largest possible mobilization of the pro-struggle forces inside the Congress and ultimately for leading the whole Congress to struggle. Only positive political initiation and action can succeed in achieving this end. Let us therefore, concentrate our energies on it in a co-ordinated and united manner.

¹ P.C. Joshi, Communist leader and editor *National Front*, and Jayaprakash Narayan, General Secretary, All India Congress Socialists Party, issued the statement on the Forward Bloc and Left Unity.

73. On Left Unity: K.F. Nariman to Jayaprakash Narayan, 9 June 1939

K.M. Munshi Papers, Microfilm (29), File No. 43/11, NMML.

I am tempted to write this to you after reading yours and Mr Joshi's statement to the Press. I have attempted to call a conference in Bombay shortly before the AICC meeting, of the nature of your desire, of the representatives of all existing Left Groups and all such Congressmen as agree with the two-fold aim of preparing the country etc. I presume Subhas Babu and others agree that as you desire the consolidation of Left forces must be based on voluntary co-operation and co-ordination on a common and united programme and policy. Swami Sahajanandji's views appear to be the same. There is no desire to form an organized opposition group, but the intolerance and

monopolizing tendencies of the present High Command naturally leads to such grouping. You must have seen their attitude in Constitution Sub-Committee, the efforts to oust these who do not agree and will not bow to them in all matters.

You should write to Subhas Babu in the same lines as your statement to the Press and I am sure that the apparent differences will disappear. There seems to be more points of agreement and a little discussion will remove all apparent differences.

In that case the proposed Conference may be made a common platform to all the Leftists that you desire in your statement. If you will write to me as to what exactly you want after negotiating with Subhas, I am sure our point of view will be satisfied.

One point more; I am sending circular letters to several members whose names have been supplied to me. It is possible that some of them may be 'Socialists'. Please do not understand that I am trying to approach them direct in spite of your executive decision. As I do not know the names of all your members, such mistakes are likely to occur though inadvertently. Since you had written in your first statement that although you could not officially support the Forward Bloc, you would still co-operate and help. May I know if you will permit individual members, who desire to join, or are they also banned?

74. Unity of the Left

Editorial, *National Front*, 11 June 1939.

It has become increasingly obvious to all Congressmen, to all fighters for national freedom that the suicidal drift towards constitutionalism, unless rapidly checked, would lead to widespread demoralization and disruption.

How to check the drift, how to save the Congress from disruption, have become burning questions of the day, questions of decisive importance for the success of our national movement.

We have pointed out on several occasions that the first step towards checking the drift must be the achievement of Left Unity—unity among socialists, communists and radical Congressmen, unity in the ranks of those who are conscious of the danger of the present policy and are prepared to actively fight for a policy of struggle. The united Left alone can turn the tide, save the Congress from disruption and take it forward.

The formation of the Forward Bloc has brought the question of Left unity to the forefront. Subhas Babu's appeal to the Socialist and Communist parties to permit their members to join the Bloc, the report that the Punjab CSP has decided to join the Bloc, the welcome change in the attitude of the CSP leadership itself show above all the growing urge in the Left camp for unity, growing realization of the need for unity.

But they also indicate the prevailing confusion regarding the character of Left unity, its exact purpose and organizational structure.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to restate our attitude towards the Forward Bloc. We do not at all agree with those who consider the formation of the Bloc a disruptive move, or who see in it only the game of 'power politics'. Discontent with the existing policy of our national leadership is widespread even in the ranks of those who are not socialists or communists. And our failure to achieve socialist unity and build up a mass socialist party which could give a positive lead and rally these sections for effective struggle against the policy of drift and against the Right Wing offensive created a situation in which the formation of the Forward Bloc representing a consolidation of Left nationalists was inevitable.

The Forward Bloc, therefore, as it is today, represents the consolidation of Left nationalists, of Congressmen who are not socialists or communists but are determined to fight for the adoption of

a radical policy by the Congress on all fronts—workers, peasants, States' people and on all issues—War, Federation, etc. As such, we look upon it as our ally, as a group with which we must establish the closest united front relation.

Should socialists and communists join the Forward Bloc? Will that be the way of achieving Left unity?

A bloc is not a party. It is an alliance of parties and groups, a voluntary alliance for pursuing a specific policy. As such the membership of real bloc must not be individual but must be on the basis of parties. If the membership is individual decisions will have to be arrived at by majority and the bloc in that case will itself be a party—its voluntary character, the independence of parties that constitute it will be gone. The decisions of a real bloc must be arrived at by mutual agreement among the parties and not by majority votes. On issues on which agreement is not possible the parties must have freedom of action. These two conditions—membership on the basis of parties (and not individuals) and decisions by mutual agreement among the parties (and not by majority votes)—are essential for a real Left Bloc.

For socialists and communists to join the present Forward Bloc individually can only mean 'their joining a consolidation of Left nationalists'. That would mean a step away from socialism and towards left nationalism. That would weaken the socialist movement and hamper the achievement of Socialist unity.

What we stand for and what is needed is a real Left Bloc representing the fighting alliance of the Parties of socialists and communists and the Forward Bloc—a Bloc that shall fulfill the two conditions outlined above, shall coordinate the activities of the entire Left on a national scale, shall unify the Left more and more and shall enable it to play its role of unifying the Congress and taking it forward.

What shall be the political basis of Left unity? From a narrow coterie of middle-class intellectuals the Congress has grown into a mighty organization with 50 lacs of members and with millions more that follow its lead. That unity which the Congress has achieved has to be maintained and further extended and strengthened.

On its own the Left cannot launch nation-wide struggle against imperialism. That struggle must be launched by the Congress as a whole and conducted under the leadership of the Congress. The Left shall not be able to fulfill its political tasks, to check the drift towards constitutionalism and to move the Congress forward unless it is able to win the majority of Congressmen for the policy of struggle. Though far stronger than before, the conscious Left constitutes a minority in the Congress.

The Right Wing is today following a policy of compromise—an anti-struggle policy. But even for following that policy itself, it needs mass support. By winning the masses of Congressmen for the policy of struggle the Left can move the leadership itself or isolate it if it refuses to move.

Tens of thousands of Congressmen are there who yet retain faith in the present leadership but who are prepared to fight actively for a policy of struggle and against the policy of drift. There are hundreds of thousands more who are dissatisfied with the existing policy but who are today passive and who can be won over if the Left is able to demonstrate in action its mobilizing power, its ability to give concrete lead on the burning political and organizational problems before the Congress.

All these factors must determine the basis on which the Left must unite in order that it may achieve its object.

It is necessary to stress this because with the growing realization of the need for Left unity has also grown the tendency to consider Left unity as anti-Right consolidation, as unity of all elements that are opposed to the present 'High Command'. Wrong analogies are being given of previous

splits in the Congress and the need for another split stressed. The need for unity in the Left camp is being emphasized, as in the resolution of the Bengal Labour Party on the Forward Bloc, without specifying the nature of unity and its political tasks. That the Left has to unite in order to maintain and, strengthen the unity of the Congress is being forgotten.

What has the Left to do today?

The united Left has to act politically and not factionally. The struggle against the policy of drift and for a policy of advance has to be waged on a mass scale on the national political plane. This is the immediate task.

Hitherto the Leftists, particularly the socialists and communists, have, generally speaking, organized mass demonstrations against only such specific manifestations of the compromising policy as affected the working class and the peasantry—anti-Black Bill strike in Bombay, Anti-Congress-Zamindar agreement demonstration in Behar, etc. Even on these issues they have not been able to mobilize the masses of Congressmen. On political issues they have been generally content with moving resolutions in the Congress Committees. The struggle has not been carried into the masses of Congressmen, the issues have not been made live. The masses of Congressmen have not been moved by the Left on political issues.

With the strength that they have already acquired, with hundreds of Trade Unions and Kisan Sabhas under their leadership, with their vastly increased strength in the Congress itself, the socialists and communists, if they unite with the Forward Bloc, many of whose members are Congressmen of standing and influence can today give the growing urge for unity and struggle a positive form, can organize mass demonstrations on a nation-wide scale demanding that the States' people's movement be renewed, that active preparation to resist war begun, that full support of the Congress be given to workers and peasants struggles in defence of their economic rights, that bureaucratic highhandedness in issuing prohibitory orders against popular movements be combated, that nation-wide protest be organized against the Indo-British Trade Pact, against every defiance of the popular verdict by the autocratic Central Government, that the policy of retreat before vested interests be ended and the people's counter-offensive launched. Such mobilizations, if we are able to make them powerful enough, would swing large masses of Congressmen towards struggle, thereby bringing irresistible pressure on the leadership.

This is what the Left to do today—to act on the political plane and on a mass scale, mobilizing millions of Congressmen for demanding the adoption of the policy of struggle by the Congress, acting as an independent political force on specific political issues, ever defending the unity of the Congress against disruptors both from the Right and the Left.

Left unity on these organizational and political bases alone can act as unifier of the Congress and the nation.

75. Forward Bloc: Extracts from the Statement

Govt of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, Roll No. 12, West Bengal State Archives.

Secret

(3) On 9.6.39 afternoon P.C. Joshi and R.D. Bharadwaj were closetted together with Subhas Chandra Bose for about 4 hours. The discussion centred round the 'Forward Bloc' and the attitude of the Communists towards it. The net result of the discussion as I could gather, was that the 'Forward Bloc' cannot bring in the CPI within its fold as it can never alone serve the purpose of a 'Left Bloc' within the Congress. P.C. Joshi and R.D. Bharadwaj also made it clear to Subhas Chandra Bose that the Left Bloc should be the common platform for all the left elements in the

Congress and the 'Forward Bloc' should form one of the parties of the 'Left Bloc' just as the CSP, CP, Radical Congressmen's League and other left elements. This attitude of the CPI leaders very much discouraged Subhas Chandra Bose who for the first time invited M.N. Roy to have a discussion about the 'Forward Bloc' (attempts were also previously made by some leaders to arrange a meeting between these two leaders but none took it seriously). So long Subhas Chandra Bose was avoiding M.N. Roy only with the hope that thereby the Socialists and the Communists could be placated but since that had failed Subhas sent for M.N. Roy to discuss with him about the 'Forward Bloc' and on what terms M.N. Roy could join it.

76. On Bose–Roy Meeting: M.N. Roy to V.B. Karnik, 12 June 1939

Govt of Bengal, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, Roll No. 11, West Bengal State Archives. This letter was intercepted by the Intelligence department.

My dear Karnik,

These are our last days here, and the pressure of work is simply terrible. Therefore, there will be no long letter; there will be no foreign article either. But you have enough material.

A few words about a very important event, practically all important political groups and individuals in Calcutta not hostile to us or to him, have been pressing Subhas Babu to come to some terms with me. He was reluctant to do so. But finally the desertion of the CP has made him nervous. The same effect has been produced by the development of things in this province. The other day, the *Statesman* wrote that with all the tom-tom about Forward Bloc, 'M.N. Roy is gaining ground at the cost of Bose'. However, the historic meeting took place last evening and continued until after 1 a.m. This is the first time he spoke somewhat frankly. Yet we should not be very optimistic. He feels himself rather deserted. Therefore he is angling for our support. As a matter of fact, his proposition to me was that I should publicly support the Forward Bloc, so that the better sort of radical elements might be attracted to it. He wanted to know if I would attend the Bombay Conference, and on my answering in the affirmative, eagerly requested me to issue a statement to that effect. I am doing that tomorrow. Whatever may be the ultimate outcome, for the moment the atmosphere desired by you has been created. I took the opportunity for asking him to accept the invitation to open our Poona Conference. He would not reply until we meet again in Bombay. The fact is, and he practically admits it, that he is not prepared to go as far as ourselves, and is eager to secure the support of the disgruntled right-wingers out of office. I adopted a very tolerant attitude, and we agreed to co-operate on a minimum programme to be adopted at the Bombay Conference, subject to our retaining the freedom of acting in our own way. A detailed report will be given personally....

77. Communist Resolutions for AICC

National Front, 18 June 1939.

Comrades Bharadwaj, Sardesai, Bankim Mukherji, V.D. Chitale, Sohan Singh Josh, Panchu Gopal Bhaduri, Somnath Lahiri and other Communist members of the AICC have given notice of the following resolutions:

Indo–British Trade Pact

This meeting of the AICC records its protest against the certification of the Indo–British Trade Pact by the Governor-General, though the same was rejected thrice by a clear vote of the Assembly. This Pact while giving special preference to Lancashire goods delivers a serious blow at the Indian

Textile Industry and is in the main responsible for growing crisis in the industry. This imposition of the will of British finance capital is not only a menace to India's premier industry but also a challenge to Indian patriotism and must be resisted with the combined powers of the nation.

The Committee is of opinion that attempts on the part of the Indian mill owners to counteract the economic effects of the Pact by reducing wages or curtailing employment are not only harmful to national unity, but do not also constitute an effective solution of the problem for the textile industry. The Committee hold that an organized boycott of British as well as foreign piece goods can alone enable the country to safeguard the interests of the Indian industry and to give a fitting answer to this attack of British Imperialism on the industrial development of India.

The AICC therefore resolves, that, a Committee be appointed to formulate and enforce an effective country-wide boycott of British and foreign cloth, including such measures as the picketing of foreign cloth shops, prevention of unloading of foreign piece-goods by organizing strike action of dockworkers, etc.

The Indo-British Trade Pact aims at curbing the economic development of the country as a whole and in order to successfully oppose it, it is necessary to enlist the support of all sections of the population, particularly of labour. The AICC therefore, calls upon Indian mill owners not to resort to lock-outs or wage-cuts or to oppose the programme of ameliorative measures for labour which the Congress Ministries may in the near future enact.

The War Crisis

The AICC views with great concern the deteriorating world situation and the increasing aggression on the part of the fascist powers leading to a devastating international war. The policy of Britain is to aid and abet the fascist powers in the attempt to weaken the democratic and progressive forces of the world. Congress has repeatedly declared its policy of uncompromising opposition to fascism and war and its determination to resist the exploitation of Indian man-power and resources in the interests of British Imperialism.

The Imperialist government in India is intensifying its preparations to involve India in the coming war. It is carrying on the mechanization of the Indian Army, has started recruitment on an extensive scale and is developing a base of war industries with British capital in the country. In order to nullify the popular opposition to war the Government of India Act has been amended giving the Central Government powers to interfere with the working of popular ministries in the event of war emergency....

Under these circumstances the preparation of the country for active war resistance has become an immediate necessity in order to successfully carry out the Congress policy in the event of war.

This meeting of the AICC, therefore, directs the Congress organizations in the country to take up active anti-war propaganda in hand. Special attention should be paid to the recruiting areas explaining to the people the necessity of desisting from recruiting in the imperialist Army. Organization of railway and dock workers should be taken in hand by the Congress Committees in order to prevent the transport of war material during the days of war. The cooperation of merchants and traders should be sought in order to prevent the supply of war material and food stuffs for the purposes of war. Congress volunteers should be trained in organizing peaceful war resistance. In order to carry out these tasks the Provincial Congress Committees should instruct the local Congress organizations to at least hold one anti-war meeting every week popularizing the Congress programme.

The AICC is also of opinion that the Congress Governments in the various provinces should make their position clear by unequivocal declarations, that they will refuse to help the Central

Government in war and recruitment, and that they will resist with all their powers the working of the new amendments to the Government of India Act.

Struggle for the National Demand

The Tripuri resolution of the Congress emphasized the necessity of preparing the country for a nation-wide struggle in order to face effectively the national and international crises that loom ahead. Since then the need for such preparations has become more urgent because of the increasing war danger and the imperialist offensive in the form of the passage of Constitutional Amendment to the Government of India Act, Indo-British Trade Pact and various other measures attacking the interests of the Indian people. The AICC is of the opinion that the time has come when more concerted attempts to prepare the country for nation-wide struggle to enforce the national demand should immediately be taken in hand.

The AICC advises the Working Committee to appoint a sub-committee for this purpose, which must be assigned the task of directing the Congress organizations in this behalf and supervising the early preparations of the country for struggle. In order to effectively carry out the Congress programme the AICC calls upon the Congress organizations to organize a National Volunteer Corps trained in the Congress programme and capable of organizing the workers for struggle.

In order to explain the significance of the National Demand, a manifesto explaining the same, and calling upon the people to make the preparations for peaceful mass civil disobedience should be broadcast on behalf of the AICC. Further the Committee decides that a National Demand Week should be celebrated during which the programme of struggle for the National Demand should be popularized through meetings and demonstrations and the consciousness of the people roused in this behalf. The AICC requests the Working Committee to fix the dates of the National Demand Week and the programme to be arranged by the local Congress Committees on each day of the week.

State Peoples' Movement

The AICC notes with regret that the suspension of movement in the States has been followed by intensification of repression by the State authorities. This is borne out by the refusal of the Talcher Durbar to accede in the moderate demands of the people and thus enable the refugees to return, the firing on the people in Ramdurg and Gangpur, the continued incarceration of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and other prisoners in Jaipur and the uncompromising attitude of the Princes in general. British Imperialism through its Political Department is abetting these repressive acts and encouraging the Princes to violate the agreements into which they had been forced to enter in a number of States as a result of the growing strength of the popular movements.

Recognizing the struggles of the States people for Responsible Government and democratic liberties as integral parts of the national liberation movement the AICC resolves that henceforth the Congress shall directly help and guide the movement of the States people. The AICC, therefore, requests the Working Committee to immediately convene a joint conference with the standing Committee of the All India States Peoples' Conference and devise ways and means to resume the struggle in the States with the full backing of the Congress.

The AICC further requests the Working Committee to fix a day for demonstration of national solidarity with the States people's struggles and to direct Congress Committees all over the country to hold rallies and conferences everywhere to create popular support for the States people's demands.



78. Where Does Unity of the Left Stand?

Article by P.C. Joshi, *National Front*, 18 June 1939.

18 June 1939

The actual breaking out of a World War is drawing nearer and nearer. In such a critical period nothing would suit Imperialism better than passivity and division in the national ranks. This alone would enable Imperialism to successfully yoke India to its war-chariot. Our national leadership, instead of preparing the country for the impending struggle, instead of forging greater unity in our own ranks, continues to sit with folded hands, and instead of preparing for an offensive against Imperialism is carrying through an offensive against the Left, that is, splitting the unity of the National Front and suppressing the forces of struggle. This suicidal policy can only lead to the strengthening of Imperialism and our collapse before it even without a struggle. This is the supreme danger facing our national movement.

The discontent against the Right is growing by leaps and bounds. Large sections of the rank and file, not only of the Left, but even those who the other day were under the influence of the Right, are going 'Left'. Their resentment against the disruptive policy of the Right is assuming the character of an elemental revolt which can be characterized as the Right is fighting us instead of Imperialism, let us struggle to throw out the Right then, that will clear the path for struggle against Imperialism. In short, we are being faced with the prospect of fratricidal struggle with in the National Front rather than fraternal unity of the Front against Imperialism.

The Left parties and groups stand divided and, therefore, politically weak and ineffective and unable to give a positive direction to the discontent of the rank and file. Unable to unite themselves they are far away from being able to unify the forces of the nation. Thus the offensive from the Right coupled with the inability of the Left to successfully overcome it has created a situation which the opportunist and factious elements are able to exploit under slogan of struggle against the Right.

We communists saw what was coming and as early as September 1938 at the time of Delhi AICC gave the call for the unity of the Left, through a Left Bloc, to unitedly check the policy of drift and disruption by positively implementing the fighting programme of the Congress and thus generating a movement which would be able to maintain the unity of the Congress and also lead it onward to struggle.

At that time and subsequently several leading comrades of the CSP took the stand that organization of the Left itself was disruptive, it would evoke greater offensive from the Right and would inevitably become an anti-Right combination. We argued with them long and patiently that if we had pleaded for the unity of the Left against the Right that could be disruptive of national unity—Left disruption as a blind reaction to Right disruption. On the other hand, we were pleading for the unity of the Left as unity of those Congressmen who stood consistently for the policy of unity and struggle. We argued, refusal to unite the Left meant refusal to resist Right disruptive policy, to fight for the unity of the Congress, to strengthen the forces of struggle, which would lead ultimately to capitulation before British Imperialism and growing disintegration and wholesale demoralization in the national ranks.

Subsequent events bore us out. The events at Tripuri and Calcutta AICC disclosed the ruthlessness of the Right and the inability of a disunited Left to move the majority of Congressmen.

The inability of the Socialists and Communists to agree upon the necessity of uniting the whole Left led to the emergence of the Forward Bloc, a coming together of the Left nationalists to organize themselves and along with the Socialists and Communists. We welcomed the Forward Bloc as expressing the urge of the Left nationalists to unite themselves. But we pointed out that by

itself it could not be the expression of Left unity for which a Left conference representing all Leftists, and not only the Left nationalists, was necessary where the form of unity of the various Left elements could be hammered out. We asked the leaders of the Forward Bloc to clarify their aims and political platform. The published platform of the Forward Bloc was unexceptionable and in fact such as alone could be the aim of any genuine Left group. But the speeches and statements of some of its foremost leaders disclosed departures from the policy of United National Front.

There was light or loose talk about split in the Congress. We understood the need for the unity of the Left to struggle for maintaining the unity of the Congress itself. Today, Congress alone can be the organ of people's struggle against Imperialism. To split the Congress is like butchering ourselves and giving up the struggle against Imperialism. It is the Right that is seeking to divide the Congress and squeezing out the Left. If the Left follows a similar course we will have struggle within the National Front and its final disruption.

Some leaders of the Forward Bloc talked about 'Fascism of the High Command,' 'need of an alternative leadership', etc. Such statements express blind negative anti-Rightism. This at best is only reflecting the discontent of the rank and file with the present leadership. But doing this alone is not the task of a political leadership. It has to show the way out. The present stalemate within the Congress cannot be ended by organizing an anti-Right struggle but by ourselves positively and concretely implementing the policy of unity and struggle and uniting the mass of Congressmen behind it. The offensive from the Right has to be resisted, but this can not be done by launching a counter-offensive to throw out the Right but by the Left mobilizing not only itself but a majority of Congressmen to defeat every manifestation of the policy of disruption and capitulation.

Today, the majority of Congressmen want a policy of struggle but they also have faith in the existing leadership. To advance the slogan of alternative leadership in such a position is only to help perpetuate the hold of the Right Wing over their own following and isolate the majority of Congressmen from the Left, that is, the fighters for the policy of unity and struggle. To initiate an anti-Right struggle, therefore, does not check the Right but strengthens it.

A national leadership reflects the correlation of forces within the national front. When it does not, it becomes a drag and a disruptive force. What the situation demands today is a united leadership and not an exclusive homogeneous leadership as we have at present, nor an alternative leadership as some Leftists desire. A homogeneous leadership is acting as a brake and proving disruptive. An alternative leadership could only be established through disruption, or it remains an empty slogan. A truly representative national leadership today could only be a united leadership. This is what the Left has to fight for. An alternative leadership of the national movement and the overthrow of the old leadership only emerges when the masses, during the course of a nation-wide struggle, through their own experience, get convinced of the slogan of a new leadership is not to draw the masses towards struggle but keep them away from it.

These are the questions, that politically divide the Left and there can be no organizational unity unless the political basis of Left unity is clearly defined and understood alike by all Leftists. We Communists cannot unite with those to whom the struggle to maintain the unity of the Congress is not the first consideration, and which must necessarily lead to accepting and working for a united leadership, neither the present exclusive leadership nor a new alternative one.

Organizational Form of Left Unity

As regards the organizational form of Left unity, it could only be a Bloc and not a Party. What is the difference between a Bloc and a Party? A Bloc is a union of Parties and groups while the basis of a party is individual membership. A Bloc works on the basis of agreement while a Party functions

through majority voting. The Forward Bloc is attracting to itself Left Nationalists, and the only form in which they could unite with the Socialists and communists was inside a Bloc and not as individuals inside a Party. If the Forward Bloc was sought to be organized as a Party they should not expect the Socialists and Communists to join it and thus in practice liquidate their own Party. A socialist and Communist could not join the Forward Bloc as an individual if it was sought to be organized as a Party for that would be going back from Socialism to Left Nationalism. There were points of unity and yet fundamental differences between the Left Nationalists, Socialists and Communists and they could, therefore, be only united on the basis of a Bloc and not a Party.

So far an important section of the CSP leadership was bitterly opposed to the Forward Bloc. The CSP now agreed to a Left Conference to discuss the platform of Left consolidation and to the setting up of a Left coordinating committee. The CSP through a joint statement of Jayaprakash and myself has taken a big step towards Left unity. We, Communists, approached the Forward Bloc leadership to discuss the joint Socialist offer but it has unfortunately not accepted it.

We argued, on the basis of what had transpired during our discussions, that they did not see the difference between a Bloc and a Party when they were thinking of decisions by majority and membership on an individual basis and that while we felt the need for a Left Bloc, we should not be expected to join a new Left Party and thus surrender our political and organizational independence. Further, even if they agreed to have a Bloc, would the Communists alone by joining it without the Socialists make it a Left Bloc? That would only be the unity of a section of the Left and not the whole Left. This would be calamitous in the interests of Left unity itself.

We argued in vain that the proposal was much more than merely informal contact between Left Parties. For the first time we will have a joint Left fraction in the AICC headed by the joint co-ordinating Committee which will also plan and lead the mass campaigns in the country and thus act in practice as the united Executive of the Left. This was a tremendous advance on the present position and held out the prospects of much closer unity in the near future. Socialists, Communists and Leftists represent the forces of struggle today. Their coming together will strengthen the existing local and partial struggles. National political campaigns jointly initiated by them will be effective preparations for the coming nation-wide struggle and win growing numbers of Congressmen for participation in activities which will quicken the tempo of our movement so that a nation-wide struggle becomes possible. The prospect was struggle or submission. If the elements of struggle could be put together and made to participate in and prepare for struggle all together, the pressure of circumstances would itself drive them closer and closer together, when on the basis of their own experience, in the interest of the common struggle, they will seek and realize higher forms of unity. We, therefore, said let us start from an elementary stage of Left consolidation which can be commonly agreed upon by all and through the common work we will live down the present mutual suspicions and eliminate hostilities and thus render possible greater and closer unity.

The Forward Bloc leadership will either have complete unity within the Forward Bloc but no immediate steps towards unity and not even a Left coordination committee. No Party can have unity on its own terms and to demand this is to perpetuate disunity. Left disunity today would only intensify the Right offensive. This together with its consequent 'Left' reaction will only please British Imperialism.

We regret that the Forward Bloc leadership has also turned down today the proposal of an all-embracing Left Conference of Socialists, Communists and Left Nationalists and has decided to go ahead with the Conference of the Forward Bloc alone.

Thus just when it seemed that chances of Left unity were brightest and when the demand for unity has become the loudest, we remain disunited.

We, Communists, would even now seek unity of the whole Left and keep contact both with the Forward Bloc and the CSP. We hope there will not be mutual sniping and no efforts will be made to force unity on one's own terms and thereby disrupt instead of unifying the Left. We would be willing to cooperate with the Forward Bloc in every locality and province for joint work. In view of Left disunity it becomes doubly imperative that Socialist-Communist unity be speeded up so that the united Socialists may more effectively forge Left unity to prepare our people for the coming battle through the National Congress.

The Forward Bloc in its Bombay Conference will no doubt discuss the whole problem thoroughly and we hope it will authoritatively adopt a political platform on the basis of which it may be possible for Socialists and Communists to cooperate with it and will not turn down, without further reconsideration, the offer of unity made by the Socialists and Communists.

Time is a vital factor. The situation demands some sort of Left consolidation RIGHT NOW. The offensive from the Right is directed against us all, no Party of the Left can prepare our nation for the coming battle single-handed, or by working in isolation from each other or at cross-purposes; the imperialist war drum is sounding louder and louder. If we fail to unite even now, are we going forward or will it not be going down the abyss?

79. Left Unity: Maharashtra Takes the Lead

Article by S.G. Sardesai, *National Front*, 18 June 1939.

18 June 1939

In these strenuous times when everything seems to be in the melting pot and even old political and organizational ties are being strained to a breaking point, it was a relief to find the all-leftist elements in Maharashtra assemble together at Poona after the last meeting of the MPCC. This province occupies by no means a prominent place in the Left Wing politics of the country. But at times even backwardness has its advantages, for it implies less sharp divisions in the Left camp and hence greater chances of Left unity. Industrial and intellectual centres like Sholapur and Poona have, no doubt, experienced all the bitterness of internecine warfare among leftists, but for the rest the issues that have rent Left solidarity elsewhere are still in embryo over the greater part of this province.

The immediate impetus to the conference was given by the assemblage of the representatives of all Left groups at the meeting of the Provincial Congress Committee, and the initiative taken in the matter by Sane Guruji. It is necessary to say a few words by way of introduction regarding Sane Guruji for, his simple and inspiring eloquence, his vast human sympathy and utter modesty have already made him the recognized champion of the peasant masses in the province. He is still not much known to leftists in the other parts of the country. Head Master of a High School in Khandesh till 1930, he joined the Civil Disobedience Movement, a confirmed Gandhite. In subsequent years he wrote proposals in Marathi attempting passionately to fit his remarkable identification with the misery and the sorrows of the masses within the orthodox ideology and framework of Gandhism. Even today he has not declared a formal revolt against it. But his protestantism has reached a degree that has already made him a *pariah* among the provincial custodians of that faith. Instructions have been sent round everywhere that Sane Guruji is to be shunned, no quarter is to be given to him, no conference must be presided over by him. Indeed, he is infinitely more dangerous than the socialists and the communists, because his words have an appeal that the leftists with all their ideological superiority cannot dream of attaining. I shall sum him up in the very words that once appeared in *National Front*: 'Sane Guruji today stands for

everything that is restless in Khandesh, everything that is yearning to make the masses realize their mighty present, and mightier future. Truly will history record of him that his very limitations were an asset to our movement for they prevented him not from growing with it but from reducing it to a lifeless formula.'

Such being the qualities of the initiator of the unity move, the fifty odd leftists (including quite a good many independent leftists) that assembled at the Conference started work from the very outset in an atmosphere of good will and with a determination to seek points of unity and not of differences. Sane Guruji opened with a short but pithy description of the stalemate in the country and the necessity of regenerating life and faith in the people. He was followed and substantially endorsed by Comrades G.P. Khare, H.R. Mahajani representing the Royists, and S.M. Joshi and N.G. Gore speaking for the CSP Comrades V.D. Chitale and K.N. Phadke were followed by P.V. Gadgil a leftist journalist and writer on socialist theory and practice. At one stage the discussion appeared to become a bit too sharp but the prevailing sense of the meeting again brought it on to the right path. On behalf of the communists I pointed out that we were all agreed on three basic things, viz., (1) that the international situation and the policy of drift and disruption being followed by the Right Wing within the Congress demanded an immediate unity of all Left forces, (2) that the purpose of this unity was to unite the Congress for the nation-wide offensive proposed by Tripuri, (3) that concretely this meant the popularization of Congress resolutions on a mass scale, the starting and intensification of local struggles, the democratization and activation of the INC units and a powerful drive for mass enrolment into the INC. Since the purpose of this conference was to determine, in spite of mutual differences which could not be completely submerged forthwith, what joint action all leftists could take immediately, it would be better not to raise such differences or start a controversy over them at the moment.

On this basis the conference then proceeded to draw up instructions for Leftist workers all over the province, and also elected a committee of five for continuous mutual consultation and co-ordination of work. It was agreed that whatever the committee did would be done by unanimous agreement and not by an ordinary majority. It was also decided that leftist workers in every district should also be brought together to further the plan of action decided upon by the conference.

Already the effects of the conference are visible in the province and united action of the Left-Wing is developing in certain districts.

A Left-Wing unity conference is being planned during the ensuing AICC week in Bombay. A similar approach should go a long way to help the forging of unity on a nation-wide scale as well. In the meanwhile, those provinces that can make a move in the same direction may not wait for the lead to come from the top, for time is pressing and what may be saved today may be beyond repair tomorrow.

80. Bose in Peshawar

North West Frontier Province Governor's Report, 23 June 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2210, NAI.

Bose arrived in Peshawar on June 18th and stayed for only 24 hours. So far the 'Forward Bloc' has fallen distinctly flat in this province and Bose must be disappointed with the result of his visit. The procession organized in Peshawar city was terminated on receipt of the news of John Khan Sahib's death. None of the leading members of the Congress Party or the Muslim League took part in the proceedings. Bose is believed to have told the socialist leaders that he intended to launch his struggle with the British government next year, and that he could count on the support of Jawaharlal Nehru, who in Bose's opinion, is sitting on the fence temporarily owing to Gandhi's influence.

Bose's speeches followed the usual line explaining that the 'Forward Bloc' was necessitated by general pusillanimity in the Congress ranks, and by the ineffectiveness of Provincial Congress Ministries who were trying to work, when they should be trying to wreck the constitution. It is clear that the visit has made no impression among the Muslims in general; a few Hindus and Sikhs may follow him for want of anything better....

81. Forward Bloc

Tribune, 25 June 1939.

25 June 1939

The conference of the Leftist organizations held at Bombay under the presidency of Subhas Chandra Bose not only reached a decision of great moment with regard to the consolidation of Leftist forces in the Congress, but passed a comprehensive resolution regarding their programme of work. There are parts of this programme which will command unhesitating assent in all progressive quarters. That religion should not dominate politics or Political affairs, which should be guided by political and economic considerations alone, that strenuous efforts should be made to fight provincialism and communalism, that such corruption as exists among Congressmen should be rooted out, are propositions in regard to which there can be no difference of opinion among Indians who believe in their country's Political destiny as a free and self-governing nation. The fourth item in the programme, which relates to the restoration of democracy within the Congress and the replacement of the present authoritarian tendency, is undoubtedly controversial, but in our opinion it goes to the root of the whole matter and is perhaps the one item by which more than by any other the success of the Forward Bloc will be measured. With the fifth item we are only in partial sympathy. Let the Parliamentary programme of the Congress be implemented more vigorously and with a radical and revolutionary mentality by all means, if what is meant is that the programme should be so worked as to expedite to the utmost possible extent the advent of full constitutional independence. But if the idea is that 'Congress ministries and Congress organizations in the country should set before themselves the objective of developing a parallel government in the country,' we need hardly say that we are strongly opposed to it. The ideal of a parallel Government might have had its value as long as an irresponsible and irremovable Government was functioning in the country is obviously out of place today when the Government in India is already partially responsible and when the Congress and political India have set their heart irrevocably on capturing the only subsisting Governing in the country.

82. Rammanohar Lohia¹ on Forward Bloc

Article by Rammanohar Lohia, *Congress Socialist*, 25 June 1939.

25 June 1939

There are many factors, declared and undeclared, that have led to the formation of the Forward Bloc. Among these is the desire to resume the national struggle against British imperialism and the founder and advocates of the Bloc have laid great stress on it. The chief attraction of the Forward Bloc lies in this desire. For those who have supported the stand of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose in the correspondence that took place between him and Mahatmaji, this desire for struggle has been the main point in dispute and in which Bose, they think, has won. Mahatma Gandhi has maintained that the country is not yet ready for a struggle while Bose has demanded that the Congress should resume its fight for freedom. On the face of it, radical elements in the Congress should find

themselves in the camp of Bose for have they not been maintaining that the Congress has gained in strength and that the policies of the British Government are destructive not only of India's freedom but also of world peace?

There has been a slight mis-stating the issue both by Mahatma Gandhi and by Bose. We are in the midst of a situation in which all around us are partial struggles and a general struggle with the British Empire is inherent, even imminent. It is no use saying that the Congress should resume its fight, for that would mean that the struggle has at present ceased and what is needed most is the desire and the mentality to resume it. Likewise, it is little use suggesting that the country is not ready for a struggle, for already many situations of conflict are arising and a more general conflict as in the event of a world war may permit us no alternative to fighting the British Empire. The question at issue is therefore something different. It demands of us an appraisal of our strength and weakness of the many problems that face us and of the particular policies that we have to work out.

Mahatma Gandhi rightly drew pointed attention in his letters to the problems of Hindu-Muslim Unity, corruption and violence and mutual distrust among Congressmen. The problems of resistance to Britain in the event of a war and of awakening the peasantry and workers through agitation and ministerial action are equally insistent. There is also the problem of popular struggles in the States. It is with regard to these various problems that the Indian mind should be concerned. They are the source of our present strength and weakness; in so far as they are nearing solution they add to our strength and they weaken us to the extent that they remain unsolved. Congress policies and action should, therefore, be directed towards the solving of these problems. It is not the demand for resumption of the struggle, that will bring the Congress any nearer to a general fight against imperialism or, what is worse, help us emerge triumphant when it comes. Our increasing strength, on the other hand, that follows upon solving of the problems that face us will both hasten a clash with imperialism and ensure our success. Policies of and action towards war-resistance, Hindu-Muslim unity and peasant awakening will give us strength and unity, check imperialism in its work of exploitation and thus hasten the general fight for freedom.

A tactic of putting the cart before the horse has also been suggested. Bose has maintained that resumption of the general struggle for freedom will remove the corruption and violence that is in our ranks and also facilitate Hindu-Muslim unity. The truth in this observation is outweighed by its falsity. It is no doubt true that a part of the corruption in our ranks is due to our policy of working provincial governments and, when this policy gives way to one of struggle, corruption will diminish. It is equally true that, during a period of struggle, a strange dynamism creeps into the people's action and that is why national reconstruction is known to accompany national resistance. But this is very far from saying that activities that prepare the people and give it strength and unity and form are included in a policy of resistance, and that this policy should be worked out and the activities will automatically take place. One does not challenge an enemy in the hope that his punches will give one strength and technique even though punches, unless in the case of unequally matched fighters, usually have that effect. One teaches technique and gathers strength on one's own before acquiring these in a fight. It is a much wiser policy to let general resistance follow upon strength-giving activities and sectional action. In fact, in the very act of solving our several problems that mean our disunity and weakness, we make possible a successful general resistance. We should therefore attempt to face directly and squarely our problems of disunity and weakness rather than to have them solved for us indirectly through a policy of general resistance. More concretely, there is a very good deal for us to do in regard to Hindu-Muslim unity, peasant awakening, war-resistance and democracy in the States and the maximum possible that may be done in this connection will alone bring about and justify a policy of general resistance. We may

not, for instance, lightly brush aside the state of Hindu-Muslim tension today and its repercussions on a general struggle for freedom. That is not to say that, unless Hindu-Muslim relations are made perfect, we may not wage our fight for freedom. But that is equally not to say that, no matter what these relations are, we must at once aim at a general struggle. The wise course for us would be to seek to remove Hindu-Muslim tension by resorting to such activities and social and economic programmes as cut across the religious divisions and bring about greater amity, and to let general resistance, unless forced on us as in the event of a world war, flow out of these activities and programmes.

Is it possible under the present leadership of the Congress to work out policies which may increase our national strength and give us a unified national desire to end foreign rule? This question in some shape or the other, is at the back of the so-called Left propaganda and action. In fact, it appears to be a predominant question at the time as far as the Left is concerned. And the Left appears to have answered the question with a basic formula. This formula is no doubt clothed in various guises by different groups and on different occasions. As long as the present Congress dominates, no strength-giving and unifying national policies are possible. The formula is also known to emphasize and condemn the drift and reformist mentality of the present leadership and thereby, to encourage revolutionary mentality in the country. Between these two varieties of the formula, there are numerous other shades and oscillations. But there is one feature common to all varieties of the formula and that consists in a persistent frontal attack upon the present leadership. This attack has indeed become a main article of Left propaganda and action and is as such, among the bases of the Forward Bloc.

It is apparent that there is a lengthy process of thought and experience between the question and its answer. The question was whether the Congress today can work out strength-giving policies and the answer was that the Congress leadership must be frontally attacked before that can be done. Indeed, there should be systematic and continuous attempts to think out policies in regard to our several problems and equally persistent efforts to work out these policies and they should all end in failure before this answer can be made with any justification. No such persistent thought and effort has been made. The different sections in the Congress have tended to move in their own separate grooves and there has been much blind friction and little disputes have caused black rage. When in a movement two sections arise each of which accuses the other of weakness and betrayal, one may almost be sure that the movement is on the downward grade.... All such accusations today are dangerous. They divert the attention of the people from their real weaknesses to certain imaginary weaknesses. The weakness due to communal disunity, for instance, ceases to worry men's minds and they are deeply concerned about mutual crusades in the nationalist camp. These mutual accusations also create an atmosphere in which lies flourish, propaganda replaces action and a general bigotry and self-satisfaction prevails.

The problem for Congressmen today is not one of distributing the power that the Congress has won but of acquiring more power. There are yet many enemies of freedom external to the Congress and they are the impanel power, princely order, big gentry and communal interests. They are yet very strong and apart from being the political authority in the country, have a sectional hold on the feelings of the people. Their emotional hold over the masses must disappear before they can be defeated. This is a problem for the Congress as a whole to solve. It is the primary duty of every Congressman to concentrate all political power within the Congress and all else is secondary. But we revert here to the original question: Is it possible to do so under the present Congress leadership? Is there not impassable obstruction as for instance, the suspension of struggle in the States, reluctance to organize resistance against the peasant movement? It is difficult to call this obstruction impassable for two strong reasons: one, that the so-called forward elements have

no doubt developed spasmodic activity but have little system in their work, two, that the movements they develop tend to depart from Congress methods. As against the lack of system and of conformity with Congress methods of forward elements, we have in the so-called Right a rigidity and distaste of all action except their own. These are removable defects in our mutual relations and the obstruction caused by them cannot, therefore, be called impassable. Take, for instance, the struggle in the States, Mahatmaji has advised its general suspension and his exclusive emphasis on constructive activities has naturally not met with universal approval. Mahatma Gandhi is wrong in his exclusive emphasis: he is neglecting to use popular energies which are good enough for pure political action but are unfit for silent constructive reform and is thus letting them go waste or rebellious. But the attitude of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is perhaps more wrong: he expresses his inability to understand Gandhiji's action and, by suggestion, associates himself with the vague demand of forward elements for struggle in the States and stops at that. What forward elements should do is to grasp the significance of Gandhiji's action underlying which is the unquestionable necessity of arduous preparations and non-violent practice among the States' people's and, then, to transcend Gandhiji and undertake struggles in such areas where they have prepared the masses for a long and peaceful action. They should cease their vague demand for vaguer struggles. It may be that difficulties will arise and friction take place between the so-called Left and the so-called Right and obstacles placed in the way of action not sanctioned by Gandhiji. But if these difficulties are not overcome in the normal way through temporary misunderstandings but give to mutual and persistent frontal attacks, they will no longer be mere obstacles in the way of the movement but its disruption. Essentially perhaps, we have to choose between difficulties and disruption, difficulties in the way of developing action on policies of war-resistance, States struggles and the like, or disruption caused by frontal attacks on Congress leadership. In so far as the Forward Bloc has made a frontal attack on Congress leadership into one of its main objects, it has chosen the path that points towards disruption. What the Congress needs today is thoughtful propaganda and well-prepared action to solve the several problems that make for national weakness. In this way, strength will accrue to forces that develop such propaganda and action and there will be a rearrangement of the balance of power within the Congress. With the progress of the movement, the leadership will also progress, even if there are occasional lags.

¹ Rammanohar Lohia (1910–67); born at Akbarpur, Fyzabad district, Uttar Pradesh, educated in Bombay, Calcutta and Berlin; member, Executive Committee, Congress Socialist Party, 1934; Secretary of the Foreign Department, Indian National Congress, 1936; arrested for anti-war speeches in Calcutta; did not approve either of Gandhi or of Bose in their approach to War Issue; went underground during Quit India movement, 1942; arrested 1944 and detained for two years; left Congress with other Socialist, 1948; Secretary, Praja Socialist Party, 1953; member, Lok Sabha from Farrukhabad from 1963 till his death. He attended first International Conference of Socialists at Frankfurt, 1951; organized first Asian Socialist Conference at Rangoon, 1953; initiated movements for freedom in Goa, and for democracy in Nepal in 1946.

83. Conference of League of Radical Congressmen

'Poona Conference Resolutions', *Searchlight*, 30 June 1939.

Pune
30 June 1939

The All India Conference of League of Radical Congressmen met this morning to discuss resolutions when only delegates were present; the press and public were not allowed. M.N. Roy presided.

It is understood that the conference passed seven resolutions. By one resolution, the League of Radical Congressmen welcomed all efforts for the organization of an effective opposition to the

policy of the present leaders of the Congress and extended the fullest support to Forward Bloc as the platform for a united left in the Congress. But the resolution observed that the plan of organization of the Forward Bloc as a platform for left unity had miscarried and it was now being organized as a left wing group.

The Conference 'strongly disapproves' of the advice on which active struggle by the States people has been indefinitely suspended and considered the new technique as detrimental to the interests of the States people and to the development of national unity.

The Conference also passed a resolution on political prisoners in which resentment was expressed at the policy adopted by the Bengal and the Punjab ministries towards the problems of their release.

The Conference resolved to launch a campaign and to mobilize support for the release of political prisoners and requested the Working Committee and the AICC to place before the country a concrete plan of action in pursuance of the Calcutta resolution on that subject.

84. Tripuri—A Class Approach

New Age, Vol. 6, No. 2, July 1939.

[This is the thesis by Niharendu Dutta Mazumdar and his group which was rejected by the Indian Communists as embodying not merely deviations but repudiation of the fundamentals of Communism. The answer to this thesis by the Communist leaders of India was also published in the same issue of *New Age*.]

2 July 1939

Triburi has set the Left Thinking:

Various attempts have been made to assess the swift-moving events of Tripuri. Some have seen in it a victory, others a set-back of the forces against the Federal Plan. Some are dissatisfied with the suspension of democracy within the Congress, others are satisfied with the resolutions. There are so many opinions as there are groups of Lefts.

Classes in the National Struggle

The three decisive leading factors in Indian politics are (1) Imperialism (2) Indian capitalism (3) the Working class. The character of the national struggle depends on the relative strength of these three classes.

Many Socialists have begun to think that this type of analysis, since it is based on class forces in Indian politics, is sectarian. To them there are only two groups in India—(1) Imperialists and (2) anti-Imperialists. There are others who would object to the mention of the working class part from the bourgeoisie, on the plea that it would go counter to the idea of United Front. It is only necessary to mention, in reply to these objections, that the conception of United anti-Imperialist Front, while it paves the way for a United struggle of rival classes against a common enemy, does not do away with the conception of class society. Classes in society—even in Indian society—remain, and their alignment still determines the course of event.

Shifting Balance of Classes

It is wrong to conceive the relative strength and the degree of antagonism between classes as something fixed and unalterable. A glance at China shows this. The Chinese Revolution found the whole people united against feudalism, backed by foreign imperialist interest. In 1927 the relationship of classes was so altered that Chiang Kai-Shek, the head of China's Republic,

representing the Chinese bourgeois interests, ranged himself against the working class, against the poor peasantry. The Chinese bourgeoisie was growing in power, the danger of aggression from imperialists was remote, so Chiang concentrated on stamping out the Reds, the internal obstacle to the unhindered growth of Chinese capitalism.

The economic crisis, which began earlier in Japan than elsewhere, forced Japanese imperialism to prepare for aggression. While the Chinese bourgeoisie weakened the Chinese people by internecine warfare, Japan grew in might. The first act of aggression occurred in 1931. Manchuria, Jehol and North China were seized bit by bit, while Chiang still carried on his anti-Red drive. By 1937, however, the position of the classes was radically altered from what it was a decade ago. Japanese imperialism was out to seize the whole of China, and the only factor which provided effective resistance was the Red Army, the arm of the Chinese working class. The Chinese bourgeoisie was faced with the only alternative to extinction—in acquiescing to the urgent demands of the United Front put forward by the Reds. In course of a few weeks, all China fought Japanese imperialism as one man.

Balance of Classes in India

The class relationship are not so transparent in India, because until now the working class has not asserted itself as an independent class force in the national politics. The political struggle of the working class is being waged by the radical petty bourgeoisie led by declassed Socialist intellectuals. Nevertheless, the ideology of struggle developed by this class unmistakably shows that while it lacks the direct imprint of the Indian working class, yet it owes to its right to the ideology of the international working class.

The big upheaval of 1857 was India's first war of independence. Even as early as that, there were classes in the struggle, the dying old feudalism and a ruined peasantry, between whom war continued to be waged. The year 1905–09 saw the next big nationalist wave. Its clear bourgeois character did not prevent the whole people from supporting it nor did the bourgeoisie think of alienating any particular class from this struggle. The year 1919 again found the bourgeoisie at the helm. The years of bourgeois co-operation with imperialism in the war not only did not produce any transfer of power to the hands of the bourgeoisie but actually brought forth some worthless reforms, which would leave the bourgeoisie again at the mercy of imperialist interests. The dream of imperialism, 'industrializing' India, was only a dream, or at any rate a temporary war measure.

Class alignments changed, war time co-operation was replaced by discontent. The general post-war crisis found the country ready to be led into struggle. The withdrawal of war-time favours by imperialism was rightly regarded by the Indian bourgeoisie as an act of imperialist aggression. A struggle continued until 1924.

Again the relationship of classes changed. Hostilities on the mass front changed into a slow gathering of strength, until 1928 signalled the opening of another era of struggles.

From a study of these events, as well as from a knowledge of the class aims of the Indian social elements, it is possible to deduce certain general conclusions. We see that the relative strength of the classes is highly unstable and the equilibrium continually shifts in favour of one or the other.

Classes and Their Behaviour

1. When imperialism is powerful and aggressive, the bourgeoisie weak, and working class struggles grow in might, a favourable situation exists for the united popular anti-imperialist action.

2. When the bourgeoisie is powerful and relatively immune from an immediate attack from imperialism, the consolidation of its class power and leadership becomes urgent and this aim hinders the growth of a united front.

3. When the danger exists of an overthrow of bourgeois power, the colonial bourgeoisie, like any other bourgeoisie, seeks the help of even its rival to crush down the growth of working class power.

How swiftly these different equilibrium can be disturbed is seen from the study of India in recent years.

The surrender of 1930–32 struggles found the bourgeoisie at the lowest ebb of power. If there was any force ascendant in Indian politics at the period, it was the force of socialism. The working class had kept aloof from the struggle of 1930–32, partly due to the situation created by the bourgeoisie, and partly due to the failure of the workers' leadership to overcome these difficulties. When at the end of the 1930–32 struggle, the bourgeoisie was busy rebuilding its shattered economic strength and imperialism its slave constitution, the only live force in the country was the working class with whom the socialist leadership was seeking to establish a more organized contact. The peasantry too was developing under a socialist leadership. The year 1933–34 saw the growth of the Labour Party, in Bengal; 1934 saw the textile strike in Bombay, and the Dock strike in Bengal. The radical intellectuals saw the need of forming a left party, styled the Congress Socialist Party.

The Bourgeoisie in a Corner

The year 1935 saw the passing of the Government of India Act. The Indian bourgeoisie felt itself wedged between the impending imperialist attack and a rising temper of the working class, peasant and national revolutionary movement. It thus adopted the only course open to itself to regain its strength—namely the tactic of united front. This was achieved by Jawaharlal, the erstwhile left President in the Lucknow Congress of 1936.

Within a year Congress became so powerful that the limited franchise, with which Imperialism wished to keep the Indian people in subjection, itself brought seven Congress Ministries to power.

Meanwhile, the Italy–Abyssinian war generated a conflict between two sections of the British bourgeoisie; the Spanish conflict and the general weakening of reaction in Europe temporarily diverted British attention from India. The imminence of a British offensive on India was averted. In this breathing space the Indian bourgeoisie began to consolidate its class position, this time by the use of the home ministry of seven provinces.

Bourgeoisie Influence Leapt up in India

By the beginning of 1939, imperialism too, retrieved its lost position in Europe by the economic enslavement of France and rearmament; and in India by the use of communal strategy, which threatens to disturb 'bourgeois law and order' from a sinister reactionary angle.

Short-lived Stalemate Position

We are faced with an alarmingly delicate and unstable equilibrium in India today. One step to the left, and the bourgeoisie might ignite the powder heap of agrarian revolution, in the wake of which might come other revolutions. One demand too many and the bourgeoisie might face the combined forces of imperialist repression and communal snuggery.

In this situation, the bourgeoisie is not willing to press for such demands as it may not be fulfilled without a mass struggle. Gandhiji has suggested that a mass struggle might depart from the principles of truth and non-violence. The acceptance of Federation is a certainty, because that is the one tactic, by which, in reward for putting the country to the war chariot of imperialism, the bourgeoisie can use and obtain the home ministry of India to consolidate its power further. The bourgeoisie stands today at the peak of power, at the point most suitable for a good bargain.

Tomorrow this class relationship may be shifted and the terms will be dictated by imperialism. So the class instinct of the bourgeoisie is prompting it to accept the offer at the best price.

Tripuri

We are now in a position to solve the Tripuri tangle.

The central figure of the Tripuri Congress is Subhas. Whom does he represent?

Nothing has been consistent in the career of Subhas Chandra Bose as his stubborn resistance to the Federal Plan. Without the precision of Marxist, but with the instinct of a national revolutionary, he realized that the line must be drawn somewhere beyond which the present leadership should not be allowed to drift. He drew the line at the Federal Plan.

Until Subhas' victory nobody quite realized how matters stood. The tactic of Congress leadership so far has been to point to some vague revolutionary objective, win the support of the people and turn the struggle to its own class advantage. Thus wrecking the Constitution became using the constitution. The promise of an economic programme for the masses was out-flanked by dodges into a stubborn opposition to the class organization of workers and peasants. But Subhas's definite plan, that the imposition of the Federation would be the signal for a struggle, became as embarrassing to the bourgeoisie as it was to imperialism. It was something definite, incapable of being turned and twisted to its very opposite.

Thus unconsciously Subhas gave the lead which corresponded to the interests of masses, who would gain nothing but poverty and loss of civil liberty through the introduction of the Federal plan and war. Instinctively Subhas mentioned the struggles where his plan would not meet, with surest support, the workers' and peasants' struggles.

The Right wing had no alternative lead to offer. They neither wanted to tell the Congress ranks to shoulder arms against Federation nor had they the courage to tell them not to fight. They wanted flexibility of action, so that no struggle was precipitated, and at the same time no opportunities were lost for bargaining at the right movement. Therefore the struggle that raged at Tripuri was not Subhas's lead versus some other lead, but Subhas's pledge to definite action versus Gandhian flexibility, as to method, aim and time of action. The latter course is the political content of Pant's resolution described by Dutta Mazumdar as the 'sting in the tail'.

Masses versus Bourgeoisie

The urgent need of the bourgeoisie to get the Congress to adopt this latter course gave Tripuri's struggle a sharp and outspoken character. To the dullest it was apparent that the struggle was between the outspoken aim of the millions of the Indian people and the secret aim of the Indian bourgeoisie, between the fighting genuine democracy of the masses and the dictatorship of diplomatic, bourgeoisie.

There are many amongst us who still harbour the illusion that the bourgeoisie is going to play a revolutionary role in the struggle immediately ahead of us. We should ask them to examine the divergent methods of Subhas and the Gandhites. Subhas wants to bind the Congress to pledge and take the people into confidence. These are dictated by the need of a fight, an open mass struggle. For a mass struggle, the leadership must be democratic and aims must be specified. If the bourgeoisie had fighting in mind, it would have taken the masses into confidence if only to do the fighting for the bourgeois cause. But it does not do so. It is clear that the methods and forms of 'struggle' which the bourgeoisie has in mind do not involve a mass effort. The whole bargaining and negotiation would be conducted through the diplomatic channel.

This was the essence of Tripuri. It was not a question of personal attacks and counter-attacks. It was bourgeois leadership by dictatorial means vs democratic leadership for open struggle with specified aims.

It is a pity of pities that while the one class-aim of the bourgeoisie kept the whole Gandhist wing united and determined, the only force which could form the hard, leading core of the Left—the working class—was yet undeveloped. The varied interests of the classes represented in the Left created a dangerous political indecision. In the absence of a leader, the Left unity broke down. Divorced from organic contact with the working class, many of the socialists and communist leaders fell into the trap of Gandhian propaganda and totally misled the class significance of Tripuri. They saw in the struggles of Tripuri an uncouth scramble between the Right and the Left. Congress, they urged, was on the verge of a split. Heal the split: Unite the Congress leadership.

The questions were quite wrongly posed. The problem was not Congress unity, but the saving of Congress democracy. Because the question of democracy was relegated to the background the false issue of mechanical unity dictated their actions. Communists pandered to CSP weaknesses, CSP pandered to Jawaharlal's befogged understanding. The Right confused the real issue by surrendering to the blackmail of a split which would never have taken place, not even if Pant resolution was thrown out. In the absence of real leadership, the Left howled and abused everybody.

Prospects

Tripuri is an advance from the point of view of bourgeois strategy but a step backward from the point of view of national struggle. The Rashtrapati's victory opened a great possibility for Left consolidation but owing to lack of far-sighted leadership that possibility came to a great loss. A period of renewed suppression of civil liberties is ahead, Congress Ministry now strengthened by Pant resolution would act with determination in putting down workers' and peasants' struggles. The possibility of an all-national offensive succeeding is unlikely, because such an offensive will surely meet with stubborn resistance from the bourgeoisie ministries. What then are we to do?

To consolidate our power we must throw all our forces on the mass front, and to defend each mass struggle, however small and local in character, with our initiative. Our efforts, to bring Congress into the struggle must be exercised to the utmost. But we must jealously guard the initiative. Separate struggles should be coordinated. Cadres thrown up in the struggles must be recruited to the left parties and trained to become leaders.

Congress recruitment should be vigorously continued, but recruiting propaganda should be intelligent and politically correct. All illusions as to the role of the Indian bourgeoisie in the coming struggle must be strictly withheld from circulation. United front must not be talked of as something already achieved, but something which can be achieved when the bourgeoisie is compelled to accept it, that is to say when the working class and its allies can, and the bourgeoisie cannot resist imperialist aggression.

85. No Plan Against Imperialism: Planned Offensive Against the Left

Editorial, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 2, July 1939.

2 July 1939

'The Crisis Deepens' was our comment on the Calcutta session of the AICC. We visualized intensification of the offensive against the Left, against Kisan and Trade Union movements, against every form of mass struggle; and, as the organizational counter-part of this offensive, intensification of the effort to reduce the AICC into a packed body of Rightists, to reduce the Congress itself into

an organizational subservient to the will of the 'homogeneous' Working Committee. The drive against the left, we characterized, as the inevitable result of the policy of drift pursued by our national leadership—a policy based on hopes of a 'favourable' compromise with imperialism, based on illusions of 'capture of power without struggle'. This policy if pursued would lead to all-round disintegration and precipitate retreats on all fronts, would sharpen the conflict within the Congress.... This was our reading.

Banning Struggle

The developments since Calcutta, that culminated in the Bombay session of the AICC, have fully borne out our analysis, have proved the correctness of our reading. That the formation of the homogeneous Working Committee was but the beginning of a concerted attack against the forces of struggle has been brought out so sharply, that none, who would not deliberately shut his eyes, can yet fail to read the real meaning of these developments. Bombay has virtually banned participation of Congressmen in any mass struggle if that brings them, as it would inevitably do, in conflict with Provincial Governments. Bombay has banned open criticism of Congress Ministries by Provincial Congress Committees and has practically reduced the latter to a position of subordination to the former, thereby completely reversing the relation that ought to exist between peoples' organization and its representatives in the Legislature and the Government. Bombay has attempted to raise barrier between the Congress and the new strata of masses that are awakening to political life under the impact of the growing Kisan and Labour movements. All these constitute fresh attacks on the mass movement, on the Left, that stands today at the head of the movement, on the internal democracy of the Congress, on its inherent power and right of control over its Ministries—in brief, on the Congress and the people.

Imperialist War Plans

Grave issues were before the nation while the AICC met. Imperialist plan to convert India into Britain's war base for the entire East were being carried out with relentless thoroughness and speed. Talks had taken place between the heads of the Armies in Egypt and India for concerted action during War. For the co-ordination of Anglo-French strategy in the Far East a Conference was held at Singapore on June 22nd, and this Conference was attended by several representatives of the British Armed forces in India including the Air Officer Commanding the RAF. Production at the Cordite Factory in Aruvankadu (Nilgiris) and at the Ishapore (Ichapur) Rifle Factory were being speeded up. Two consignments of War planes had arrived in India since April and more were to arrive soon. A mighty war machine was being established in India—a machine that would be used for crushing any attempt to resist imperialist plans to drag India into war, to crush any popular movement against Imperialism.

What 'New Technique' Means?

Other problems were there equally grave and serious, problems demanding immediate attention. Suspension of the States' Peoples' movement had been followed by ruthless terrorism. At the Conference held in Bombay, only two weeks before the AICC session, the representatives of the Princes had made it abundantly clear that there would be no weakening of their offensive against the people, that they were not prepared to introduce anything except petty administrative 'reforms' in their states, that they would accept no 'dictation from outside.' 'Unabashed gangsterism', as the Working Committee statement called it, had been resorted to by the Princes. Forces of disruption were being used to divide the ranks of the people, communal passion was being systematically fanned. Gandhiji's 'New Technique'—the technique of surrender and retreat—even had not softened

the attitude of the Princes, but had, on the contrary, stiffened it. A movement that had attained phenomenal strength and was fast undermining the strongest pillar of imperialism, a movement that was bringing 80 million of our people in the political arena, thus opening up (for the first time in our history) the perspective of a nation-wide struggle against imperialism, was in the danger of being disrupted and crushed in isolation.

No Plan Against Imperialism

It is symptomatic of the line of our national leadership that although the Working Committee held prolonged meetings on the eve of and during the AICC session, on neither of these subjects—War and States—did it frame any resolution, did it give any lead. It did not adopt one resolution which takes us even a step towards struggle against imperialism. It did not have a word to say about the Congress Ministers who attended the Home Ministers' Conference at Simla where they had virtually agreed to form 'Common Front' with non-Congress Governments far suppressing communal propaganda and also 'incitement to violence of any kind whatsoever.' It did not think it necessary to pull up the UP Ministry for issuing a Confidential Circular to the District authorities recommending action against communalists and also against communists under Sec. 144, 161 and 153A. It did not condemn the lathi charges and arrest of 160 Kisans at Munagala in Madras Presidency, unheard of brutalities committed on the strikers of Behariji Mills in Patna and the arrest of 70 of them. It refused to consider the serious situation that had developed in the Frontier Province as a result of the forcible eviction of peasants from their land and had already resulted in the arrest of over 200. It did not warn the Textile Mill owners who have openly declared their intention of introducing wage-cut in defiance of the recommendations made by Congress Government Enquiry Committee, whose findings they had been forced to accept.

Planned Offensive Against the Left

Did then the Working Committee do nothing? On the contrary, it did a lot. It adopted a number of resolutions. It recommended changes in the Congress Constitution. But the most significant thing is that on every important issue the lead given by the Working Committee was such as would facilitate the pursuance of the present line of retreat before imperialism and vested interests, as would intensify the offensive against the struggles of Workers and Peasants and the people in general. And the organizational changes recommended were such, as would make the Congress itself a tame instrument for carrying out this policy. This, in a nutshell, was the meaning of the resolutions of the Working Committee. It was planned offensive against the Left.

The Basis

The entire line of the present Working Committee is based on hopes of compromise with imperialism, hopes that, faced with international and other difficulties, imperialism would be forced to grant concessions. It has no plan against imperialism. It follows the line of drift as far as imperialism is concerned. But as the forces of struggle grow, the pursuance of this line becomes more and more difficult. Hence arises the need for offensive against the Left. Constitutionalist drift and planned offensive against the Left are counterparts of the same policy.

At Bombay this offensive against the Left was to be launched with full vigour. The AICC was to be transformed into a packed body entirely controlled by the Right Wing. Participation in Working Class and Peasant struggles and their organizations were to be banned. Congress Ministries were to become all-powerful bodies standing above the Congress and dominating it. No wonder the Bombay session became a session of conflict between the Right and the Left, no wonder the basic conflict, struggle against imperialism, was relegated to the background.

First Success of Left Unity

The attempt to abolish proportional representation in the AICC and to invest the Working Committee with dictatorial powers, to ban at its discretion the participation of members of the Congress Committees in 'any other' organization was given up at the eleventh hour. This did not, as subsequent resolutions show, indicate any change of attitude towards the Left, towards mass organizations of workers and peasants and their struggles. It was a purely tactical device to neutralize the opposition of Pt Jawaharlal Nehru and to prevent the consolidation of the Left, before the Right wing has fully consolidated its forces. A frontal attack against the Left in the form recommended by the Constitutional Sub-Committee was thought premature, especially, after the division on Sjt Satyamurthi's resolution (seeking to make one year membership a precondition for Congress members to have the right to vote) in which even Jawaharlal voted against the Right, and the Left secured 42 % of the votes—perhaps the highest ever recorded in the AICC. But that offensive has only been stayed. It would be launched again in the near future. Consistently with its political line, the Right cannot give up attempts to squeeze out the Left and all supporters of struggle, from the Congress organizations.

Consolidation of the Right

Thus the united Left has already succeeded in defeating to a certain extent the disruptive policy of the present leadership. That this unity, if consolidated and properly guided, can ultimately turn the scale and win the entire Congress for the policy of struggle can be doubted by only those who lack confidence in the masses, who do not realize the extent and depth of discontent with the existing policy. It is precisely because the present leadership does recognise it, it is precisely because it is conscious of its weakening position, that determined efforts were made at Bombay to consolidate the Right wing and win over the centrist element by playing on their loyalty to Gandhiji, by Ministerial pressure on lukewarm supporters. Regular meetings of the AICC members who in the past supported the present leadership were held and every effort was made to constitute a solid bloc of its supporters in the AICC. The fact that after the first day's session the votes polled by the Left fell appreciably was due, to a great extent, to this factor.

Defeat Attempts of Disruption

That should not discourage any genuine Socialist and Communist, any genuine supporter of a struggle. To think that it is because of Left consolidation that the Right wing has consolidated is to ignore realities. It is the political need of the Right that drives it towards consolidating its general influence—which is still immense—into a solid organized bloc, and that need arises because of the growing discontent against its policy. The lesson of Bombay is not that unity of the Left is disruptive as it divides the Congress, but that such unity is essential in order to defeat the existing policy and save the Congress from disruption. It is more than ever necessary to realize this, particularly because already attempts are being made by the Right wing leadership to disrupt the growing unity of the Left—a unity in which it sees the most serious obstacle to its compromising line—by detaching a section of the Left from the Consolidation. That attempt must be defeated.

Consolidation of the Left

It was on the eve of the AICC Session that the representatives of the Congress Socialists, the Forward Bloc, the Communists, the Royists and the Kisan Sabha leaders met and agreed to form a Consolidation Committee consisting of representatives of the parties and groups of the Left. Decisions would be arrived at by mutual agreement and the Consolidation Committee would

function as the United Executive of the entire Left. It was a step of tremendous importance and significance and what it could achieve was seen even on the floor of the AICC when the Left acted with greater Unity than in any other Session before.

Tasks Before the United Left

But that is not enough. The fact that the Bombay Session was reduced to a Session of conflict between the Left and the Right must not cloud the vision of the Left and make it forget its real tasks. If Left Unity is viewed as a consolidation of elements that for some reason or other are opposed to the present leadership then the inevitable tendency would be towards opportunist alliances; the Left consolidation would confine its task to that of securing unity in the AICC and Congress Sessions, enrolling Congress members in the same way as the Right wing leaders do, moving 'Left' resolutions in the Congress Committees. The masses of Congressmen will not come in the picture. Struggle against the policy of drift would be fought verbally or would degenerate into factional fight against the Right.

The United Left has to move the masses of Congressmen, convince them of the dangers of the present policy of drift, win them over for the policy of struggle. If the United Left acts on a national political plane, organizes mass actions, mass campaigns, mass opposition to every concrete manifestation of the policy of compromise e.g. the 'New Technique' in States, the anti-struggle resolution of the Bombay AICC, draws the masses of Congressmen, who are today mostly apathetic, into political activity through these campaigns and actions, then and then only will it be able to win the majority of Congressmen against the policy of compromise and for the policy struggle and thus move the Congress forward. For carrying out these tasks the Consolidation Committee has to act as the unifier of the existing mass movement and raise them to national political plane. Left Unity in the AICC alone would not go up far. In the Provinces, in the Districts and in the Tehsils, committees have to be formed of opponents of drift, of supporters of struggle—no matter what their political affiliations are. And these committees must function as broadest organs of struggle, coordinate the activities of the Left on all fronts in their respective localities and act under the political guidance of the All India Consolidation Committee towards a single objective—that of ending drift and launching nation-wide struggle. If unity of the supporters at struggle on this political basis, and on such a broad scale is achieved, millions of Congressmen who are today passive, would be drawn in and the pre-requisites created for nation-wide advance.

Achieve Socialist Unity

That is the type of Left Unity that the situation demands. Such unity, in order to be really effective must have a socialist core—a core that can be supplied only by a single United Socialist Party. Only the United Socialist Party shall be able to politically guide the United Left, prevent it from becoming a factional consolidation against the Right, prevent the discontent with the existing policy of the Right from flowing into disruptive channels. Hence it is that for ending the policy of drift, for consolidating the Left, socialist unity acquires tremendous importance. Hence it is that the most urgent task before Socialists and Communists is to work towards the establishment of a single United Party of Socialism—a party based on the principles of Marxism–Leninism, completely free from the ideological and political influence of the bourgeoisie—the united revolutionary Party of the Indian Proletariat. To this task the Socialists and Communists have to set themselves. In the formation and strengthening of such a Party lies the guarantee of unity and of advance against imperialist rule in the near future.



86. Congressmen and Satyagraha

Independent India, Vol. 3, No. 27, 2 July 1939.

2 July 1939

The AICC resolution, banning Satyagraha by Congressmen without 'the previous sanction of the PCC concerned', follows logically from the path that the Congress leadership is following and has decided to follow. The Congress leaders have definitely set their face in the direction of slow constitutional advance working on the perspective of a gradual transfer of power. In that scheme mass action and struggles of the people are certainly out of place and it is but natural that the Congress leaders should seek to suppress them. What was being sought to be done all these days since the acceptance of offices in a perfunctory manner will be hereafter done in a systematic and coordinated manner. The AICC resolution debars Congressmen from organizing and leading the struggles of the masses. We are not particularly enamoured of the weapon of Satyagraha as understood in its Gandhian sense. It is a weapon which has been played out and which is utterly inadequate for the enforcement of the national demand for independence. But the Congress leaders have used the word in this resolution to designate all extra-constitutional forms of struggle. If the resolution is given effect to, the Congress will be progressively isolated from the masses and will cease to be what it is today. The resolution, as was put by a number of speakers in the course of the discussion in the AICC, will have the effect of killing the Congress in order to save the Ministries. Are Ministries more important than the Congress? That is the question which all Congressmen must answer and on that answer will depend their reaction to this resolution.

87. Turn the Tide

Editorial, *National Front*, 2 July 1939.

2 July 1939

The session of the All-India Congress Committee which met in Bombay on the 24th June marks the beginning of a new and critical period in our national history. Parliamentaryism and disruption openly dominated the deliberations of the session. The homogeneous Cabinet came forward in its true colours setting its face against struggle and disarming the nation when it was on the eve of big battles.

'The crisis that overhangs the world and India demands from us unity of action, the sinking of petty differences, the co-operation of all those who care for the independence of India and the maintenance of the Congress as a strong and disciplined organization... conditions in India have reached a stage which is detrimental to the progress of the country and deterioration is inevitable unless a rapid advance is made. We cannot merely wait for the British Government to impose Federation so that we might combat it and thereby seek to reach our objective'—with these words Babu Rajendra Prasad opened the AICC proceedings.

How did the Working Committee propose to solve the present stalemate, the overhanging crisis and maintain the Congress as a disciplined and fighting organization? How did it propose to secure the co-operation of all those who care for the independence of India? By delivering a powerful blow to the Left, by attempts to squeeze it out of the Congress, by banning every extra-parliamentary activity, by making the Congress organization subservient to the will of the Ministries. In short, the Right Working Committee came out with a 'new technique' to meet the impending struggle, the technique of petty compromise and national disruption.

Determined to make the Congress safe against struggle, the Right Wing concentrated its efforts on reactionary constitutional amendments. The meteoric rise of Congress membership into millions in the last two years was a source of constant danger. The 4 to 5 millions who were enrolled last year were restive and ready for struggle. They must be denied responsible positions in the Congress. Influx of new membership must also be checked. Therefore, the Right Wing forced through the AICC the one-year rule and the three-year clause, besides putting a number of restrictions on the free enrolment of Congress membership. The masses and their active representatives, the Leftists, could not fit into the framework of homogeneous politics. Therefore, narrow the mass basis of the Congress, reduce the membership and reduce the strength of the Left—these were the war-cries of the Right Wing. Congress homogeneity must be saved at all costs; even at the cost of driving the masses away from the Congress and the Leftists out of it. That is how the Working Committee wanted to bring about unity, ‘sink petty difference and secure the cooperation of all those who care for the Independence of India.’

Bent on its relentless course of transforming the Congress in its own image, the Right Wing attempted to attack the system of proportionate representation. It was an attempt to annihilate the Left—an attempt which could be temporarily foiled only by the pressure of Left unity. The homogeneous cabinet elected only to choose a more propitious occasion for this final *coup d’etat*. Annihilation of the Left Wing constitutes the specific remedy of the Right Wing to meet the crisis which overhangs the world and India.

Disruption masqueraded as ‘purification’; disorganization sallied forth as Congress unity and strength.

Not satisfied with the prospect of a homogeneous AICC in the near future, the all-Right Working Committee, forced the sinister anti-satyagraha resolution through the AICC. No member of the Congress is to participate in any satyagraha without the previous permission of the Provincial Congress Committee. Congressmen must abandon the Kisans to their own fate, the workers to the mercies of the vested interests. As ‘good’ Congressmen they must run away from the struggles of the masses and abjure every form of extra-parliamentary activity. And this at a time when the offensive of the vested interests is increasing beyond measure; when landlords and capitalists, encouraged by imperialism are rebelling against Congress Ministries and their initial programme of mass amelioration. In short, the resolution means complete capitulation before the offensive of the vested interests. Directed mainly against the Kisan Sabhas and Trade Unions, the resolution is nothing short of a demand on the Congress to cut itself away from the masses.

Babu Rajendra Prasad’s appeal for unity to meet the crisis appears meaningless in the background of this suicidal and disastrous resolution.

The reasons advanced in justification of the resolution clearly bring out the parliamentary non-struggle mentality behind it. Until recently the High Command got capitulatory and anti-mass resolutions sanctioned in the name of the non-violence. The Civil Liberties Resolution was justified in the name of growing violence. Parliamentarism carried itself under the cloak of non-violence permitting violence against the masses.

But now there were no false excuses advanced. The ban on satyagraha was openly and shamelessly placed in the interests of constitutionalism. Both Sardar Patel and Bhulabhai Desai openly said that if the Ministries were to maintain law and order, function as Ministries, then, restriction on satyagraha was necessary. Extra-parliamentary struggle, preparation for a national offensive, all this were openly sacrificed to suit the conveniences of the Ministries. The Tripuri resolution warned that the possibilities to do good to the masses under provincial autonomy were rapidly getting exhausted and, therefore, it called for nation-wide struggle: the AICC resolution

repudiate the resolution of the open session at Tripuri, and forbids struggle in the name of provincial autonomy.

This open subordination of the Congress to parliamentarism was announced with equal clarity in yet another resolution which forbids the Provincial Committees to interfere with administrative matters and to refer question of policy to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee. Even the right of public criticism is denied to the Provincial Committees.

Here the circle is complete. The extra-parliamentary struggle must stop to make a constitutional functioning of the Ministries possible. The provincial organ must subordinate itself to the will of the Ministry and has not even the right of public criticism. With the right of interference and criticism denied to the provincial organizations, the resolution becomes merely a license to the bureaucracy... to wreak its vengeance on the people. The two resolutions together constitute an invitation to the bureaucracy to direct open repression against the masses without fear of criticism or interference at the hands of Congress organizations. This is the sort of co-operation which the Right Wing wants between the Ministry and the PCC.

Must we bow down to anti-national disruption? Is there no way out? The way was pointed out in the course of the AICC Session itself. For the first time the united Left faced the disruptive cabinet and waged a heroic battle to turn the balance in favour of the nation. Though it could not succeed in checking the offensive, it is bringing about a steady isolation of the Right Wing. Before the united Left, the Right Wing could not trust to its ideological influence alone. Its waning influence forced it to consolidate its forces in a bloc—a sign of growing isolation considering the position the Right Wing occupied, and still occupies.

These first fruits of Left unity must be consolidated. Nothing but Left unity can save Congress from disruption. Nothing but unity of the entire Left can force the Right Wing to give up its present suicidal course. The nearness of war, the growing discontent of the Indian masses, the repression directed by the Ministries and finally the policy of the Right Wing are making ever increasing inroads on national unity.

But the united Left can and must defeat them. It must declare that on no account will it leave the masses to their own fate and betray them. It will stand by the masses in the extra-parliamentary struggle; it will send thousands of Congressmen to the theatres of struggle and thereby make the ban inoperative. It will not allow the Congress to be cut off from the masses, it will never accept constitutionalism as its method of fight. By organizing national campaigns, by mobilizing the masses of Congressmen for struggle and against drift, by participating in mass-struggles and by mass enrolment the united Left will be able to turn the tide which threatens to become a deluge, and so take the nation forward.

88. Presidential Address at Delhi CSP Conference

‘Acharya Narendra Dev’s Presidential Address’, *Hindustan Times*, 3 July 1939.

Delhi
3 July 1939

The Delhi Provincial Congress Socialist Conference opened in the Municipal Hall yesterday under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev. The spacious hall was packed to suffocation. Earlier, Acharya Narendra Dev was taken out in a bullock-cart procession through the streets of the town. Several girls on horsebacks formed the vanguard of the procession. The procession terminated in the ground outside the Town Hall where Acharya Narendra Dev unfurled the National flag. Delivering his presidential address, Acharya Narendra Dev stated:

Ever since the Tripuri Congress, confusion has arisen in the ranks of the Congress Socialist Party. There is great resentment against the National Executive in certain quarters for its attitude of neutrality as regards the Pant resolution. The leadership is accused of vacillation at a crucial moment and it is said that the executive in taking the decision of neutrality departed from the party line. There is lack of understanding amongst party members about the party line itself. The party line has been modified from time to time, though its essentials have always remained the same. It has sometimes been insensibly charged of inaction not by individuals but by the whole executive though not much has been done to educate our members on the new lines. Other groups have taken advantage of this confusion and as a result the party is passing through a crisis.

Continuing, the President said: 'We have allowed other groups to enter the party and these groups function as such within the party itself. This is against all principles of party organization. The party has thus largely lost its character and has become a platform.' He added: 'The party has by its growing influence in the Congress also succeeded in correcting the ultra-Leftist tendencies of certain Socialist groups in the country. The attitude of Socialists of all ranks towards the Congress has radically altered during the last five years. It has decidedly become favourable towards the Congress and this happy result should be attributed to the correct attitude taken by the Congress Socialist Party from the very beginning towards the national organization.'

In order that the Congress Socialist Party should continue to represent the healthy tendency, it was necessary that the Socialists should first set their house in order. All important questions should be thrashed out in the party and decision should 'be taken democratically and every effort should be made to make the party as homogeneous and compact as possible. Strict party discipline should be enforced in the enrollment of members and should insist on quality rather than numbers. Certain organizations have got jealous of the growing power of the Congress and they want to undermine its influence and prestige. Socialists should protect the Congress from such attacks and should do nothing which might weaken the great organization to which Socialists belong.

The President then explained at length the reason why the Socialist Party took the neutral attitude at the Tripuri Congress on the Pant resolution. Proceeding, Acharya Narendra Dev said that the 'Left' was weak and divided and in the present state no section could initiate and lead the struggle single-handed. It had been said that the present leadership did not want a struggle in the near future. 'Even if that be the case,' he asked, 'should we not by energetic action create an atmosphere in the country which will compel the leaders to implement the resolution on the National Demand? Let the so-called "Left" give proof of its earnestness; let it translate the Congress resolutions into action and those who are far behind will soon have to follow suit. Congress political action alone can move the Congress as a whole towards implementing its own resolutions.'

He added: 'If the slogan of unity for immediate struggle is correct, our stand of neutrality was the only correct attitude consistent with our policy. Opposition to 'the Pant resolution, if it had succeeded, would have brought about disunity and we would have been held responsible for it. If there is no unity today in the Congress, Congress Socialists are not to blame.'

While he criticized the 'Left' for its shortcoming he also did not absolve the 'Right' of its share of blame, and stated that the 'Right' had done nothing to implement the resolution on the 'National Demand'. The resolution had been relegated to the background and steps were being taken which led one to think as if the High Command had no other programme except the parliamentary programme to implement.

Regarding the working of the Congress ministries in the provinces, he remarked that offices were accepted to strengthen the national movement and not to demonstrate fitness for ruling. If the ministers find that it was no longer possible for them to fulfil that purpose they should frankly say so and vacate office.

He added: 'The Socialists can hold themselves responsible for provincial administration only so long as they are in a position to utilize these new opportunities for strengthening the nations. Such opportunities are every day proving less and less and things have come to such a pass that the Parliamentary programme can be fulfilled only by subordinating that every other programme to it. If that be so and if we are called upon to make a choice, we shall vote for direct action.'

89. Grave Crisis in Congress: Subhas Bose's Appeal

Tribune, 4 July 1939.

4 July 1939

The following is the text of the appeal made by Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, leader of the Left Consolidation Committee, urging to observe July 9 as an All-India Day:

'On the eve of the recent session of the All-India Congress Committee which commenced on June 24, says Mr Bose, it was widely believed that the present majority in that Committee would continue its offensive against the Left. Certain recommendations of the Constitution Sub-Committee of the All-India Congress Committee lent colour to this belief and served to create a tense feeling among Leftists in the Congress. Fortunately, this tension was eased when two important amendments of a highly controversial character were dropped by the Working Committee. It is to be regretted, however, that without any recommendation from the Constitution Sub-Committee or from the Working Committee, an amendment was put forward and carried to the effect that new primary members of the Congress would not be able to exercise their franchise until twelve months after their enrolment.

'The objections that may be urged against the Constitutional amendments, adopted by the AICC, are nothing when compared to what could be said of two official resolutions placed before the AICC by the Working Committee and adopted by the former. These resolutions refer to the ban on Satyagraha and to the relations between the Provincial Congress Committees and Congress Ministries.

'The resolution prohibiting individual Congressmen from offering at organizing any form of satyagraha without the previous sanction of the PCC has created a grave crisis in the Congress. It was forced through the AICC despite the most strenuous opposition of the Left. We are convinced that the resolution militates against the basic principles and traditions of the Congress. The Congress has grown from a small body of well-to-do individuals into a mighty mass organization, embracing millions of the people only because it has boldly championed the cause of the poor and the oppressed and has led them in their struggle for bread and freedom. The AICC resolution virtually denies to Congressmen their fundamental right to participate in the struggle of the masses while, on the other hand, it encourages Provincial Congress Committees to shirk their responsibility in the matter of organizing and leading such struggle.

'It has been argued that the resolution only lays down an unexceptionable principle, namely, that if the Congress is to function as a disciplined and efficient organization every one of its members must submit himself to its control. We have no intention of questioning this principle. What has alarmed us is the spirit in which the present leadership has been applying this principle to the concrete political problems of the day. We must state that if this spirit is not immediately changed, it is bound to produce disastrous results.

'Ever since the acceptance of office in the provinces by Congressmen and particularly since last year, our ministries, as also some members of the Working Committee, have been steadily moving in the direction of resisting the mass discontent growing all over the country, while at the

same time they have often not hesitated to compromise with the forces of social reaction in the country. Incidents in proof of this contention are too many to need enumeration. There is not the slightest doubt that in order to stifle this awakening among the people in the interest of parliamentary programme the Working Committee has secured the sanction of the AICC for the resolution. But the Parliamentary programme, as conceived by the Congress resolution, cannot itself be fulfilled unless it is used to develop and draw strength from the struggle of the masses.

‘We must warn the Working Committee in all humility but with all the seriousness at our command that this resolution cannot be enforced without democratizing the ranks of the Congress and reducing the Congress to a state of impotency. The Tripuri Congress appealed to the people to prepare themselves for the struggle that looms ahead. The Working Committee’s statement issued at the beginning of the present session of the AICC says that deterioration is inevitable unless a rapid advance is made in the near future. Does the Working Committee hope to achieve this end by proscribing the mass struggles that are springing up all over the country? We urge upon the Working Committee to hold this resolution in abeyance and to move forward to the preparation for the national offensive. We also wish to make it clear that while we have no desire merely to cause embarrassment to the Congress Ministries it would be impossible to give up the struggle of the masses that is going on throughout the country or to organize new ones.

‘We cannot help remarking in this connection that by preventing Congressmen from participating in mass struggles, the Working Committee or the present leadership may inadvertently be throwing the popular movement into the hands of the non-Congressmen. It is to the credit of Congressmen that they have so far played an important part in peasant and labour organizations and have provided the leadership for those movements. We feel sure that every Congressman is conscious of the fact that our national movement and the Congress, its spearhead, have gained immensely in strength and activity by the rapid growth of these mass movements. Now this resolution, if enforced, can only result in preventing Congressmen from affording just the most essential leadership that these movements need. It will be therefore, highly unwise to try to enforce this resolution and thereby unwillingly hand over the masses to undesirable elements.

‘With regard to the other resolutions it may be legitimately remarked that they virtually deprive the Provincial Congress Committees of their legitimate right to supervise the work of the ministers. The ministries, according to this resolution, are to be taken out of the jurisdiction and control of the Provincial Congress Committees and are to be placed under the control of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee and not even of the Working Committee.

‘The most objectionable part of this resolution, however, is that which directs that there should be no public discussion of the work of the Congress Ministries. The right of Congressmen to criticize the ministries and the advantage of such criticism have hitherto remained unquestioned and in the interest of the Congress it must continue to be so. Public criticism, which we affirm must be friendly and informed, helps to maintain that healthy contact between the Government and the people which lends strength to any popular government. The resolution of the AICC will only lead to further isolation of the Congress Ministries from the Congress as well as the most advanced sections of the people. This must lead to further deterioration and drift towards constitutionalism.

‘In order to voice our protest against these resolutions, the Left Consolidation Committee appeal to the public throughout the country to observe the 9th July next as an All-India Day, when meetings and demonstrations should be held for the purpose. If by this means we succeed in mobilizing public opinion all over India in our favour, we shall be able to prevent the harm that is likely to be done by these resolutions.’

90. Delhi Socialist Conference

Hindustan Times, 4 July 1939.

4 July 1939

In a ninety-minute speech at the Delhi Socialist Conference yesterday, Jayaprakash Narayan, General Secretary, All India Congress Socialist Party, explained the aims and objects of the party and gave the lie to the impression held in some quarters that the Socialists wanted to create a split in the Congress and thus weaken that great organization. He declared that the Socialists had no quarrel with the Congress as a political organization, but did not completely agree with its programme which, they felt, was not sufficiently advanced. They also wanted to counter the growing tendency towards parliamentarism among Congressmen.

The Congress Socialist Party had been, proceeded Jayaprakash, in existence for the last five years and during this period it had constantly endeavoured to radicalize the Congress programme and to impel that body along the path of revolution. The only way they could achieve that object was to effectively organize the kisans and labourers into their own organizations under the aegis of the Congress. The Socialists never cared about the leadership of the Congress, the personalities in whose hands all the power of the Congress was concentrated, they were only concerned with its programme. It was their conviction that the old Congress programme of attaining Swaraj had outlived its utility; it had become too antiquated to cope with the modern needs. Hence the necessity of a new programme based on full recognition of the greatly changed conditions. Referring to the charge that the Socialists were weakening the parent body (Congress) by taking a different line of action, Jayaprakash Narayan pointed out that the chief task to which the Socialist Party had addressed itself was the formation of Kisan Sabhas and Mazdoor Sabhas. This they were doing to bring Kisans and Mazdoors in large numbers in the Congress-fold. The harnessing of the tremendous force behind the Indian masses, consisting chiefly of peasants and labourers, could not but greatly strengthen the Congress. The Congress was not opposed to the organization of Kisans and Mazdoors in their own organizations and therefore it could not be said that the Socialists were impairing the forces of the Congress by diverting them into different channels. He deplored the growing tendency of parliamentarism among a section of the Congress. He said that, while Socialists were trying to infuse a new spirit among Kisans and Mazdoors, the majority party in the Congress was too much engrossed in elections to various Congress and non-Congress organizations.

The speaker sketched briefly what their future fight against imperialism would be like. He said that non-payment of rent and taxes, declaration of strike and picketing would be their most potent weapons against their enemies who were standing between them and their birthright—Swaraj. Even after the achievement of Swaraj the need for a socialist organization would not disappear. A socialist organization would be required to see that Swaraj was ‘the raj of Kisans and Mazdoors and not of capitalists—to establish and maintain a socialist form of government’.

Turning to the threatening war clouds in Europe which might possibly enwrap the whole world, he explained what should be India’s attitude in the event of the outbreak. He said that if India came, as in the past, to the assistance of the British Government with men and money, it would mean the strengthening of the chains which were keeping this country under foreign domination. He, therefore, advocated not a mere passive non-participation in war, but active opposition by such methods as boycott of British goods, propaganda against recruitment, etc.

Lastly, Jayaprakash deplored the increasing communal tension. He regretted that a false impression had been created among Muslims that Congress stood for Hindu domination. He said that he had no quarrel with the Muslim League or any other communal organization, provided it

was willing to fight against British imperialism. But he regretted to say that the League was not doing it. Nor did it represent the Muslim masses or was doing anything for their welfare.

Jayaprakash concluded by expressing satisfaction at the progressive consolidation of the forces of the left which he declared augured well for the future of India.

91. Prospects of Forward Bloc: Subhas Bose's Statement

Leader, 8 July 1939.

5 July 1939

Interviewed regarding the achievements and prospects of the Forward bloc,⁴ Subhas Chandra Bose gave the following statement:

'In the provinces that I visited during the last few weeks, I found tremendous enthusiasm among the masses. I may say without exaggeration that public enthusiasm is much greater and more spontaneous than when I was touring last year as Congress president. Apart from this, I am flooded with letters and telegrams from the country's other Parts where people want to organize and establish a forward bloc. I wish those leaders who hold the opinion that the country is not prepared for a struggle could go round the country as I am doing. In that case they would not need to be convinced that all that the masses require is a bold lead. It is not merely the crowds that I have met with at different places but the spontaneous enthusiasm which I have seen on their faces that has appealed to me so much. I may, therefore, say that the Forward Bloc has already captured the masses imagination. Even those who do not comprehend the constitution or programme of the Forward Bloc are rallying round us, because they instinctively feel that we are initiating a bold and forward policy.

'In several provinces, provincial and local Congress committees have non-cooperated with me, but this has only served to rouse the masses' enthusiasm still further. From Calcutta to Peshawar, from Peshawar to Bombay and from Bombay to Jubbulpore, the story is the same. Bombay has of course given us the most pleasant surprise, because Bombay was regarded as the majority party's stronghold, but today the Bombay public is entirely with us. What has further encouraged us is the fact that the minorities have shown great sympathy for our movement. Until now they were frightened with the prospect that the Congress would be dominated by a clique working in the name of Mahatma Gandhi. This endeavour to reestablish democracy within the Congress is assuring them that they have nothing to fear from us. Not only we are fighting for democracy within the Congress and without, but we are also putting forward a programme which will serve the masses interests regardless of religion, caste or creed.

'From provinces like Madras which I have not yet been able to visit, I have been receiving encouraging reports. Friends in Madras have, for instance, assured me success equal to that we have had at Bombay. To complete our success all that we now need is organization. That is why I intend having a hurried tour all over the country. Our rallying cry "prepare for the coming struggle" has already penetrated our peoples' souls and they are bound to respond in unprecedented numbers in every part of the country.

'Speaking from my personal experience I may say that all attempts to stem this enthusiasm and prevent a forward move are bound to fail. The country demands a forward policy and that is why the Forward Bloc will succeed.

'Regarding the States' peoples' movement our policy is diametrically opposed to Mahatma Gandhi's new technique. We intend helping the States' peoples in their struggle wherever we can do so. Even if we cannot actively help, we shall refrain from putting obstacles in their way by

advising them to call off the Satyagraha movement. We shall reverse the non-intervention policy embodied in the Haripura resolution as soon as we have a majority in the Congress and we shall declare openly that our objective is to make the States' peoples' movement an integral part of the Congress. India is one and indivisible and so is the Congress. The Indian National Congress should, therefore, stand for the people of British India as well as for the people of Indian states.'

92. Call to Action—Political Prisoners

National Front, 30 July 1939.

8 July 1939

Comrades,

On the eve of this decisive struggle we venture to make this last and desperate effort to make our anxious voice reach you and through you the entire masses of India. Whom else can we rely upon for help and inspiration than you—the vanguard of the suffering humanity?

Comrades, if even a proof was required, the Sarat-Gandhi correspondence has proved with absolute precision that the fate of the political prisoners is doomed. It proves, above all, that the impudence of the Bengal Government has reached a climax. The audacious defiance of the united will of the nation cannot take a more sinister proportion than what is being witnessed today.

The irrevocable logic of the situation permits only two alternatives.

Either to surrender before this ever-increasing impudence of the handmaids of British Imperialism.

Or, to stake our everything in a determined struggle in defence of our inalienable right.

But comrades, Surrender is impossible.

It is hundred times more preferable to lay down our lives in vindication of our rights than to exist as living relics of a national cause, trampled under foot.

So the time has at last come when we feel ourselves called upon to stake our lives in a supreme and final effort to undo the wrong done to the political prisoners.

Comrades, should the unanimous will of the Nation go unheeded and uncared for?

Should our sacrifices go in vain?

Should the appeal of your imprisoned comrades go unresponded?

The final answer rests on you—the noble champions of freedom and peace.

Comrades, relying on the invisible bond of brotherhood that links us so vitally with you, we appeal to you with all our earnestness at this historic moment of our life, to unite and concentrate all your forces with a view to make our struggle an enduring success.

Symbolizing as you do, the irresistible and indomitable militant mass movement of our country, help us, comrades, with all your energies to realize our aspirations and the demand of the entire Nation.

Let the effort of your united strength open the flood gates of a colossal movement.

Let the sweep of your mighty struggle make the Government bend before the overwhelming verdict of the entire Nation.

Let the tide of your onrushing victory open the gates of Indian Bastilles.

Comradely Yours,
Political Prisoners, Bengal



93. The Left

Forward, 8 July 1939.

8 July 1939

Since the presidential election, the Left parties or forces have been much talked of, particularly, Subhas Babu was encouraged and advised by these Left parties to contest the presidential election. During the election campaign, he repeatedly said he was contesting as a candidate from the Leftists and that he would gladly retire if a real leftist was put forward by the Rightists that is, the Gandhites. But when the election was over, he interpreted the victory as a personal one—there was no question of Leftism and Rightism in the election. The confusion has started since then. His leftist supporters naturally feel let down by the victorious hero. They in their turn let him down at Tripuri—the holy alliance ceased to operate. Then till the AICC meeting in Calcutta was over and Subhas Babu was forced to abdicate, he did not indulge in any public talk of Leftism. After his resignation, he again took over the role of the defender of Leftism.

Now the air is thick with Leftist vapour, cloud and smoke. Everybody is trying to unify and consolidate the Leftist forces and everybody thinks his is the genuine brand. In the name of consolidation, we see disruption and dissensions. There is cleavage and rift in most of the groups claiming to be Leftist. Yet ordinary people hardly know the causes of these disruptions. They hardly know what brand of Leftism stands exactly for what. Now perhaps the number of such groups has completed the quota of a dozen. Then there has been formed a Left consolidation with Subhas Babu as the leader. This and the Forward Bloc have become a veritable apple of discord among the Leftists.

To be frank, we cannot understand how such a consolidation can operate. A consolidation or a merger presupposes a unity of methods, ways and purpose. Can we expect this fundamental precondition to be fulfilled in proposed consolidation? There are well-known differences among the groups merging—even in their immediate programmes and methods. Some stand for composite leadership in the Congress and have made it an article of faith to be proclaimed on every occasion with the zeal of a new convert. While some have made it a point to set up a homogeneous leadership, to replace what is now supreme in the Congress, some think organization on class basis outside the Congress—an organization of class conscious masses. Then there is the vexed question of collective affiliation where the competent groups have widely differing opinions. Then again, while some consider the only thing worth doing is to meet the urge of class-struggle, there are others in the merger who dislike it positively. There is again a wide gulf between these merger groups about the ultimate aim, purpose and technique of the next fight and revolution.

The merging groups, while differing in almost everything relevant to the coming fight, have combined. The credit for this 'all-round unity' goes to the leader or shall we say, to the need of the purse that is being collected? And this sort of opportunism is going on in the name of Leftism and revolutionary urge. Among the persons taking interest and active part in the recent confabulations and conferences for forming Leftist groups and consolidation, we see Subhas Chandra Bose, Khare, M.N. Roy, Nariman, Jayaprakash Narayan, Makhan Lal Sen, P.C. Joshi, Jamnadas Mehta, Sardar Sardul Singh, Tushar Kanti Ghosh, Tulshi Chandra Goswami, Somnath Lahiri, Bharadwaj, N.C. Kelkar, Meherally, Srinivas Iyenger, Senapati Bapat—we think the list is typical and long enough. Can anybody suggest any unity of purpose, methods and ways existing among these personalities?

Then, the members of the merging groups still owe their allegiance to their mother groups and not to the consolidation or the Bloc. They will take this command from their own respective

groups. For a merger to work, it is essential that, for the time being, the members will obey its decisions arrived at joint deliberations. But we find not even an attempt to attain this much.

The absurdity of the position is still more clear when we try to look into the internal and inter-group relations. There is suspicion everywhere. There is no mutual confidence among the component parts—either political or personal. Lest others may ingratiate themselves with my group to create internal confusion and disruption to the interest of their own groups—this is the suspicion dominant among the Leftists now. We doubt, if any merger can be formed in this atmosphere of suspicion. And it is really regrettable that all these frivolities and light-minded politics are being indulged in the name of Leftism and revolutionary outlook. There is no seriousness of purpose—only loose talk and opportunism.

94. Muslims and the Forward Bloc

Medina, Vol. 28, No. 49, 9 July 1939.

9 July 1939

The sympathy of Muslims today is spontaneously and, in principle, with the Forward Bloc; and this should be so. The Muslims desire independence in India. And it is for this purpose that they have joined the Congress in order to build a United Front against the British. Therefore Gandhi-*bhakti* or Gandhi-*shakti* cannot have any attraction to them. Satyagraha and non-violence cannot be their axioms. Hence, it is not possible for them to go into raptures in his presence and at every inspired sign and gesture of his. It is a regrettable fact that the Congress has abandoned the goal of independence ever since it has accepted ministerial positions.

95. Mobilize Congress Masses

Editorial, *National Front*, 9 July 1939.

9 July 1939

The second imperialist world war is already on. Three continents including our own are the theatres of war. Chamberlain is siding and directing the attacks of Fascism against democracy, against the peace of the world, against the heritage of mankind. We occupy a supremely strategic position. The unity of our great nation as represented in the Congress, the preparedness of our heroic people to struggle, through the Congress, is of decisive importance in this gravest of crises. We can throw our might on the side of world peace and save democracy, we can launch a united struggle against Imperialism and win freedom. We can create a free and happy India and help to build a new world order. Our destiny is in our own hands as never before.

We have to strengthen our unity, we have to rapidly prepare for struggle, we have to strike hard if we are to remain true to our people, if we mean to play our part in the world.

This is just what our national leadership does not do. It is sitting tight thinking that as the difficulties of Imperialism grow and multiply it will bend the knee before us. It fails to see that with the war-crisis grows the need for British Imperialism to cling harder to India, to rely for its very existence on our men as soldiers for itself, our resources as its sinews of war. When it was a question of war-preparations British imperialism thought of the slave constitution. When it goes to war it will go in for martial law.

Our leadership drifts and nurses the hope of compromise.

The masses, however, are on the move. The front of struggle is getting broader and deeper. The great Congress is becoming greater, new lacs are joining it every year.

This is a hindrance to the policy of drift being carried on. This cuts across the dream of 'swaraj without struggle'.

The leadership for once wakes up, not to launch an offensive against imperialism but to fight the forces of struggle, to smash the Left.

Constitutional rules have been amended. Congress is not to be the united organization of us all but of the faithful to the leadership. The unity of the Congress is endangered. Congressmen are to keep away from the people's partial and local struggles. The organ of final national struggle is being isolated from the existing struggles. Fighters for freedom are not to associate with the people's daily battles. What every Congressman so far considered to be his elementary duty is now a breach of discipline. The Ministries have been placed above the Congress organizations. The belief is openly expressed that it would not be necessary for the masses to go into action; the Ministries will get us Swaraj.

The whole course of the Congress, its very character, its traditional policy is being changed.

To resist this change, to keep the Congress to the path of struggle, to maintain the unity of the Congress, the Left Consolidation Committee has been formed.

The struggle against the policy of drift and disruption and for unity and advance must be fought on a mass scale. Congress masses in their overwhelming majority have to be awakened to the dangers of the situation and won for the policy of unity and struggle. This is no narrow issue, not Leftism versus Rightism. But the true voice of the Congress has to make itself heard, the unity of the Congress itself has to be preserved, the course of struggle has to be saved. These are matters concerning every Congressman. It is to every one of them that we have to go.

Left Consolidation would not achieve this if it remains confined to the top. It must be carried down to the provinces and in the districts. Left Consolidation is not a substitute for working in the Congress but, on the contrary, only an effective mechanism to better function and activate the Congress Committee.

Left Consolidation is not a new independent or exclusive organization. If it functioned as such it would divide the Congress between the Right and the Left, it would help to keep the mass following of the Right Wing permanently under the present leadership. In every locality the representatives of the parties of Left Consolidation from issue to issue must form the most broad-based ad hoc committees of active Congressmen who are prepared to fight for that issue and thus draw more and more Congressmen into the local movements and strengthen the existing struggles. It is they who must set an example of purity and integrity in every phase of their work. It is thus that they will expose the disruptive character of the political purge that masqueraded as purification of the Congress and render inoperative the 'discipline' that seeks to suppress popular struggles.

The Left parties have stood for radicalism in the Congress and today the masses are being radicalized faster than before. The Left parties have been leaders of partial struggles which have helped to radicalize Congressmen. How is it that the majority of Congressmen yet remain under the influence of the Right and an offensive has been launched against the Left?

First, the Left has acted only on a local scale, and not on an all-India scale, during these partial struggles it has moved only sections of the people, workers or peasants or students or States' people and not the entire people. It has acted on a local and sectional plane and not on a national, political plane, herein it has fulfilled only a propagandist role.

The turn is now being made. 9 July will witness nation-wide demonstrations against the policy of disruption and for the right of Congressmen to help the oppressed and fight shoulder to shoulder with them. This will be followed in August, by the organization of a national week to popularize, in a concrete manner, the policy of unity and struggle and prepare our people for the tasks that face them to launch a nation-wide struggle and thus implement the Tripuri Resolution to enforce

the National Demand. This is work to put our entire ranks on their mettle, to test our capacity not only to mobilize our existing following but those Congress masses as well who do not yet see eye to eye with us but who desire, along with us, the unity of the Congress and a united national struggle against Imperialism.

Second, the political disunity of the Left itself. A disunited Left cannot effectively fight for the unity of the Congress, cannot win the majority of Congressmen for struggle. It just does not inspire confidence. For example the main line of the speeches of the leaders of the Forward Bloc from their own platform has been criticism of the Right Wing, appeal for joining the Forward Bloc *en masse*, to vote for it in the coming Congress elections and thus defeat the policy of the Right Wing. This amounts to a constitutional tussle confined within committees, it does not touch the broad masses outside. This is an anti-Rightist election mobilization and is not likely to attract those who are not yet 'Left'. Such a line defeats the very purpose it seeks to serve. It begins by promising to change policy after getting the majority and ends by becoming not a majority but an anti-Rightist consolidation.

The way to win the majority of Congressmen is to move them by national political campaigns over concrete vital issues which are common to every Congressman but which the leadership sleeps over, to draw Congressmen in ever increasing numbers into the daily struggles of the toilers in every corner of our land.

Socialists and Communists working unitedly all along the line, getting closer together so as to move as one team, Socialist-Communist unity alone can be the core of Left consolidation. It is only when effective united political leadership is supplied by the Socialist-Communist leadership and ceaseless organizational initiative wells up from their ranks that the danger of Left Consolidation becoming a factional anti-Right Wing combination would be circumvented and the Left-supplied political leadership will enable it to move the masses of Congressmen and not get isolated from them.

The Delhi CSP Conference presided over by Acharya Narendra Deo and attended by Comrade Jayaprakash has welcomed the coordination of the activities of Socialists and Communists which is regarded as the only solid basis for consolidating the forces of the Left. The United Socialists are on their trial, on their unity and work depends as to whether Left Consolidation will forge the unity of the Left and become a means of moving the Congress masses or whether Left discontent not given a political and effective lead which comes from Socialism alone, will burst forth as Left disruption, a blind reaction to Right Wing disruption but objectively siding it.

96. On Socialists Unity

'Abjuring Socialism', Article by Somnath Lahiri¹, *National Front*, 9 July 1939.

9 July 1939

On the eve of the Bombay Session of the AICC the Left Consolidation Committee was formed.

It was unity of the Left, not in words, but in action. It was not a unity forced upon any party but it was a unity voluntarily agreed to by all the sections of the Left to carry forward the fighting heritage of the Congress to a new phase of struggle against imperialism. Therefore, for the first time the Left stood all-united not for a factional fight against the Right, but for defending the very basis and fighting traditions of the Congress. Left consolidation had really opened up the perspective of a new advance.

But suddenly there is a discordant note. Comrades Masani, Patwardhan, Lohia and Ashok Mehta have resigned from the Executive of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) because 'the adhesion

of the Party to Left Consolidation brings to a head the serious differences that have been growing between them and the overwhelming majority in the CSP.

They are opposed to any form of Left consolidation for it would, in their opinion, divide 'the Congress into rigid and mutually exclusive blocs' and 'the process of radicalization itself would be retarded rather than hastened.' They would rather seek to 'influence and move the Congress as a whole.'

But they gloss over the fact that what they seek to do does not arise logically out of what they would not do. The unity of the whole Congress becomes an abstract end in itself to them. But the unity of the Congress unless it is a unity for struggle against imperialism means absolutely nothing. You have first of all to maintain the basic factor of the unity of the Congress, unity against the common enemy, unity for struggle against the common enemy—and as such you have to come out against every tendency within the Congress which puts struggle at a discount.

Even these comrades would not deny that the policy of drift pursued by the Right Wing is leading them into a position of compromise and that again is leading them towards a growing 'opposition to the tendencies and forces that stand today for uncompromising struggle.'

The very task of moving the Congress as a whole makes it incumbent, therefore, to fight unitedly against this anti-struggle tendency and the consolidation of the forces that stand for struggle becomes an imperative necessity in that case. Unless the forces that wanted to move the Congress as a whole were themselves united they could not do much.

What does Marxism–Leninism which is the basis of the socialist movement teach us? It teaches us that in a colonial country, even in a bourgeois democratic revolution, the proletariat has to come out as the initiator and builder of the national struggle, as the leader of the forces.

Standing for National Struggle

What is the position today? The whole of the organized peasant movement has grown, and is still growing, under the exclusive guidance and leadership of the Socialists and the Communists, the representatives of the proletariat. This gives us a tremendous lever for fulfilling our historical role. We have the immediate possibility of being able to unite under our initiative the entire Left, that is, all the forces which stand consciously for an immediate fight against imperialism and with this huge backing we would be able to successfully overcome the tendencies of vacillation and compromise inside the Congress and to swing the entire Congress onto the path of struggle. That alone would give us the guarantee of coming out as the leaders of the national struggle and of pursuing it to its logical culmination.

It was the line advocated by these comrades that made us lose much ground. The Forward Bloc which is today gathering under its fold all the Left nationalist elements and which is very likely, sooner or later, to consolidate into a Left nationalist party, would not have perhaps come into existence at all if a powerful united Socialist Party had been there, rapidly absorbing the best and most developed elements from the Congress and rallying the entire Left under its leadership.

If Socialists and Communists had unitedly taken the lead in organizing the Left it would not have 'retarded the process of radicalization.' On the contrary, it would have, put a stop to the anti-struggle tendency within the Congress and would simultaneously have facilitated the progress of Left radicalism towards socialism. Today a Forward Bloc would tend to confine the forces of left radicalism within the limits of left nationalism. To the extent that we, Socialists and Communists are able to unitedly function the Left Consolidation, to that extent only we shall be able to influence the radical Leftists and at the same time nullify the effects of Left adventurism that are present. If we are able to guide and lead the functioning of the Left Consolidation (which in its present form becomes much more difficult than before) that alone would be a guarantee that the unity of the

Left instead of being factional consolidation against the Right becomes the anvil for forging the unity of the Congress as a whole on the basis of an all national struggle.

Hitherto the Socialists acted as the spearhead of the Left Wing in the struggle against drift and disruption. In face of the intensified offensive from the Right that struggle demands closer unity in the Left Wing camp than ever before. For the Socialists to refuse to shoulder the task of uniting the Left Wing means to refuse to lead the Left, to leave the leadership of the Left to non-Socialists, to isolate themselves (Socialists) from their allies—the radical nationalists. That can only lead to capitulation before the Right Wing offensive, to Leftist demoralization and to the weakening of Socialists themselves. Under exclusively non-Socialist leadership, Left Consolidation cannot but degenerate into anti-Right consolidation, that is, into Leftist disruption. Struggle against imperialism would recede into the background, the Left Wing would be consolidated into a factional bloc. Socialists, isolated from the other Left Wing forces, would be unable to check this disastrous process. Unity of the Congress itself would be endangered. Refusal of Socialists to unite the Left Wing would lead not to the unity of the Congress but to its disruption.

This tendency of Masani and others arises from a fundamental deviation from Marxism–Leninism, the refusal to recognize the historical role of the proletariat in the national liberation movement. This attempt to ‘move the Congress as a whole’ without the proper basis of unity for struggle does not make them move the Congress but makes them subservient to the anti-struggle leadership of the bourgeoisie. And this finds a logical ideological expression in their ‘adherence to peaceful and legitimate means’. To them ‘peaceful and legitimate means’ becomes an end in itself, that is, like Gandhiji they place the methods above the objective.

‘The adherence to peaceful and legitimate means’ is not simply a difference in opinion about the efficacy of different methods of struggle, it is a fundamental deviation from the Marxist conception of society and the state. The methods of the struggle certainly conform to the stages of the struggle, and at certain stages struggle by peaceful and legitimate means is conducive to the strength and vitality of the struggle itself. As such the oppressed classes use this method, as they are generally doing now in India. But the present day state is based upon organized violence and the acuter the struggle by peaceful and legitimate means becomes, the more and more is violence bound to be unleashed against the aspirations of the oppressed by the powers that be. In this situation to rule out violence altogether is to condone the violence of the oppressors. An analysis of class society and the history of the world has shown us that imperialism and capitalism have been using and are bound to use all their force, all their violence to frustrate the aspirations of the oppressed and to talk of not resisting this by force means asking the masses to capitulate before the forces of reaction. This is not socialism but the worst kind of opposition to socialism.

This tendency becomes particularly dangerous in the present day situation when the creed of non-violence is being used to check the forces of mass struggle. It is not the business of a Socialist today to play into the hands of bourgeois reaction by insisting on non-violence, but to go forward boldly unleashing the forces of struggle and himself being in the midst of every struggle, on the side of the oppressed, helping them in every way.

Forces and ideas cannot be judged in abstraction. They grow organically out of social struggles and change with the developments of the struggles themselves. What we have to do is to initiate and build up the struggle and go on adapting our tactics to the needs and stages of the struggle.

Masani and his friends look upon their deviations from the path of socialism as the ‘distinctive part of the CSP’ in Indian politics. And, therefore, they come to the conclusion that if the CSP has to play its own part it must not unite with the Communists.

But the CSP is a Socialist party. Its only tendency is, therefore, the socialist tendency. The major task before it is the strengthening of that tendency. And the most important step towards

that is the achievement of socialist unity. The achievement of Left unity does not make Socialist unity unnecessary; on the contrary, it makes Socialist unity all the more urgent. Without achieving unity among themselves, without their speaking with one voice and giving a positive lead, the Socialists and Communists would not be able to politically lead the Left and make Left unity an instrument for unifying the Congress as a whole.

Our stressing the need for Socialist unity does not mean that the CSP is to be forced into unity. It is for the CSP itself to decide voluntarily when and how to have unity, what steps to take towards Socialist unity. Unity except on a voluntary basis would be no real unity. The entire CSP including its leadership must be convinced of its urgency before Socialist unity becomes a reality. But to deny the very need for unity, as comrade Masani virtually does on the ground of 'differences' is to refuse to act as a Socialist, to refuse to shoulder the tasks that face us, to be blind to the unity that already exists, to refuse to see that Socialist unity is the key to any advance in the specific situation of today.

All the deviations of comrade Masani and others arise from their departure from the fundamental principles of socialism. The stand taken by them means abjuring the leadership of the Left, abjuring Socialist unity, abjuring Socialism itself.

¹ Somnath Lahiri (1909–84), a service student getting attracted to the working class movement from 1927–28, he founded in 1931 the Eastern Bengal Railway Workers' Union, and joined the Calcutta Committee of the CPI. In 1933 he was invited by the Jamshedpur workers for organizing them, brought out a Hindi weekly, *Jangi Mazdoor*, and was eventually externed for inciting militancy. In 1934 Lahiri was sent to the CPI headquarters in Bombay, arrested there on the charge of plotting to overturn the British Raj, and sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment. One of the organizers of the Left Consolidation, in 1939, he was externed from Calcutta for opposing the Imperialist War in 1940. Organizing the Calcutta Tramway Workers, Lahiri was elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1946, and successfully defended workers' interests there. He went underground following the ban on the CPI in 1948. When the ban was lifted, he concentrated on re-organizing the Calcutta Corporation and the State Assembly, and also served for a while as a minister of the Left Front government.

97. In Defence of the CSP

Article by Sajjad Zaheer, *National Front*, 16 July 1939.

16 July 1939

At a moment when the policy of the dominant leadership of the Congress endangers the very unity of the Congress and threatens the national movement with disruption, the resignation of Masani, Mehta, Patwardhan and Lohia from the National Executive of the Congress Socialist Party must come as a rude shock to all Socialists and radicals in the country.

The reasons which they have given for resigning at this critical juncture from the Executive of the party are given in detail in the statement issued by these comrades. The first part of this statement details the differences which have arisen between this group and a majority of the party Executive since the Tripuri Congress culminating in the decision of the party to join the Left Consolidation Committee formed at Bombay.

The second part of the statement alleges that the Communists have acquired influence in the CSP, by the 'close collaboration' of the CSP with them and by their infiltrations into the CSP. The statement goes on to say that this is undesirable since the Indian Communists are agents of the Soviet Government, and since the CSP differs from them on its attitude towards Congress, non-violence, democracy, the USSR, the colonial people and war.

The total impression left in the mind of an outsider by the statement is that it is really the 'close collaboration' with the Communists, and the fact of the 'embarrassing presence' of some of these

inside the party which is the root of the whole trouble. It would seem, according to these comrades, that if there was no collaboration with the Communists and if there were none of them (Communists) inside the CSP then there would be no difference between their line and the line pursued by the majority of the Executive of the CSP since Tripuri. Then the Congress Socialists would have remained neutral and not voted for Subhas Chandra Bose during the last presidential election (like Comrades Lohia and Patwardhan); they would have perhaps supported the Pant-Resolution and not remained neutral as they did in the open Session; they would have decided to support Jawaharlal Nehru's resolution unamended, and finally, they would not have touched the Left or Left-Consolidation Committee or the Forward Bloc even with a pair of tongs.

The question has merely to be posed in this manner for the absurdity of the arguments put forth by the four resigning comrades to become apparent. Surely it cannot be asserted that Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev, Yusuf Meharaly, Shibnath Bannerji, are among the 'infiltrated' Communists inside the CSP! Do they or do they not represent the CSP tendency? Or are we to believe that the CSP tendency can be interpreted correctly only by our resigning comrades?

Let us take the points one by one as they have been raised in the statement. Comrades Lohia and Patwardhan did not vote for Subhas Chandra Bose in the presidential election. But the overwhelming majority of the party did so including Acharya Narendra Dev, Masani(!) and practically all the others. It cannot be asserted that these important members and practically all the others voted for Subhas Bose under the pressure of the Communists. Then there is the question of the Party Executive at Calcutta deciding to oppose Jawaharlal Nehru's resolution if it was not amended. 'Outside influences' are alleged regarding this decision of the Executive. It is said that the Party Executive by its decision put the General Secretary who had supported Jawaharlal in an awkward position. I regret to say that facts are not quite as they have been stated here. Firstly, Jayaprakash Narayan had given his support to Jawaharlal's statement, some of the important points from which were not included in the resolution inaudibly moved by Rafi Ahmad Kidwai. These points, some of us thought, were very material. An unconditional acceptance of the old Working Committee, to be supported by us, was not desirable. Is it necessary to insinuate 'outside influence' for anybody to take this point of view? Secondly, and the comrades making the statement know this, this decision would not have been taken but for the neutrality of two prominent members of the Executive—by no means suspected of Red affiliations.

The third point made by the comrades is that the Executive at Calcutta 'turned down the adherence not only to the Forward Bloc but also to a Left Consolidation.' The statement regarding Left-Consolidation is not correct. The Executive authorized its General Secretary, to decide the matter in consultation with the Communists. It was on the basis of this clear authorization that Jayaprakash Narayan (together with P.C. Joshi) issued his statement (published in *Congress Socialist* of June 18, 1939), calling for a Left Conference at Bombay with a view to form a Left Consultative Committee. If the statement made by the four comrades is correct then it seems that the General Secretary was acting against the decision of the Executive which met at Calcutta. Surely this is not so. The General Secretary, at least, should know the exact scope of the decision of the Executive.

The last point made by the four comrades in this connection is regarding the decision of the Executive at Bombay to join the Left-Consolidation Committee. Has the CSP deviated from its line in doing this? In its thesis passed at the Faizpur Conference of the All India Congress Socialist Party (December 1936) it was laid down:

'Apart from unity or agreement among Socialist ranks it is necessary that the *forces of the Left are also consolidated and an understanding developed within its leadership*. The party should continue its efforts in this direction.' (Italics mine)

The very thing which these comrades object to most seriously is enjoined by the Faizpur thesis, the very words which today are repellant to these comrades—‘Left’ and its ‘consolidation’—are clearly laid down in our party programme. Is it, then, that this is not the opportune time to consolidate the Left, or is the manner of our doing it objectionable?

The CSP Executive has taken this decision with the full consciousness of its responsibility and after mature deliberation. It has been guided by none else than Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan. It has done so because it feels that there is no other way to make ourselves politically effective against the disastrous line of ‘homogeneity’ relentlessly pursued by the dominant leadership of the Congress. It has done so to maintain and further national unity and the unity of the Congress. It has done so not to fight the Right wing leadership but through concrete actions in furtherance of the Congress Tripuri resolutions, through work amongst the workers and peasants and the middle-classes, through propaganda and agitation against War and Fascism, through building up the Congress Committees and the National Volunteer Corps, to move the entire Congress for struggle against British Imperialism.

The Left-Consolidation Committee is an instrument which has been forged to prevent the drift towards constitutionalism in the Congress; an instrument to prevent disruption in the national ranks; it is a means whereby the Socialists will be able to curb, alike, the adventurism of certain elements in the Left and the anti-struggle and anti-Left drive of the Right.

Undoubtedly there are differences between us and the Royists, between us and the Forward Bloc men, and to a lesser degree between us and the Communists. We do not think that today we have to conduct a campaign against the High Command as such; we do not believe in the slogan of alternative leadership.

We have to reverse the present policy of the leadership, and we can do it only by our solid work in the Congress. In the mass organization, through agitation, propaganda and partial struggles, we begin, in reality, to build the United National Front, when by ‘patiently explaining’ we win over to our side the masses which today follow the Right Wing leadership. But because we differ in certain matters with some of our comrades of the Left Wing, is that a sufficient reason for us not to coordinate our activities on these matters where we wholly agree with them? Will it not serve our common purpose if we work together on a mutually agreed programme?

We are demanding, quite rightly, that the Working Committee of the AICC should be a composite one; that the Right and Left should work together and guide the entire national forces, but here are comrades to whom the idea of sitting together in the same Committee with Subhas Bose, the Communists and the Royists is repellant. Why? It is said we thereby identify ourselves with a group in the Congress. But are we, the CSP, not ourselves a group in the Congress? Does not the logical conclusion of these comrades’ argument lead to sheer liquidationism, political ineffectiveness and drift?

It is said that we will lose our identity by doing so. But how? The CSP, retains its individuality; its freedom of action; its organization; its separate membership and its discipline. By sending three of our most trusted members to the Left-Consolidation Committee, Comrades Narendra Dev, Yusuf Meharally and Jayaprakash Narayan—a committee where all decisions will be taken by common agreement and not by a majority of votes, how on earth do we lose our identity? Does working together with different groups in the Congress on the basis of a jointly agreed programme mean identification with all or one of those groups on all matters? Such is clearly the meaning of the four comrades’ statement. It is, however, quite clear that this is by no means the actual position.

I have tried to show above that the policy regarding Left-Consolidation and the decisions of the Executive since Tripuri have been taken by the Executive, under the guidance of its prominent members independently, and on the merits of the questions as they arose from time to time. It is

indeed a matter of gratification for all Socialists that on most of these questions the Communists have also agreed with us and that our General Secretary has been able to issue several statements of policy regarding vital questions of national importance together with Comrade P.C. Joshi.

For such a collaboration is to the good of the socialist movement as a whole. The Congress Socialist Party has never shunned it. It has, in fact, striven for it, and it has provided for it in its thesis and its resolutions. The whole policy of the Party in this regard, as worked out by its General Secretary, Jayaprakash Narayan, is a proof of this assertion. Do these comrades repudiate that line? Do they think that the General Secretary has deviated from the CSP tendency? The Faizpur thesis (December 1935), however, lays down:

‘In the conditions of India, the conscious leadership of the anti-imperialist movement falls on the Socialist forces. These forces are unfortunately still divided. The party has stood for unity in the Socialist ranks. It is of the utmost importance that in the Congress, in the mass movement outside, in all spheres of anti-imperialist activity, a united lead is given. If Socialists speak with a divided voice there will be utter confusion and it will only retard the national struggle.

‘Till such unity is arrived at, the minimum that is necessary is agreement on immediate tasks and line of action. On the basis of this agreement the various groups should work together till the time we are in a position to form a united party.’

Have the General Secretary and the Executive in following the line of ‘collaboration’ with the Communists gone an inch beyond the policy indicated above? Surely these Communists owed as much allegiance to the Communist International in December 1935 as they do now. Or is it that during the last two or three years they have become more subservient to Moscow? The childish tirade against the Communists has really been carried to an absurd length. At the Lahore Conference (April 1938), however, we again passed a resolution expressing the desire of the CSP to achieve Socialist unity and emphasizing the need of united action with the ‘Red group’ till such unity was achieved.

We said:

‘This Conference while it endorses the statement and the decision of the National Executive made at its Patna meeting strongly feels that the most essential condition for the birth of a united party in India is unity between the CSP and the “Red” group which are the two main Marxian socialist parties in the country and that therefore particular care should be taken to bring these parties together.’

This then is the consistent line of the Party which our four comrades seem to have forgotten. It is a pity, therefore, that these dissident comrades should have made the collaboration of the CSP with the Communists an issue against the present policy of the Party Executive.

The comrades have also stated that they disagree with the Communists in their attitude towards the Congress, the adherence to peaceful and legitimate means, insistence on democracy, the attitude towards the acts of the Soviet Government, the colonial peoples and to war. They have nowhere explained the exact nature of these differences; and any how it is not my business to clear the differences between these four comrades and the Communists. The Communists would be well advised if they do clear up these differences, so that we may all know where exactly everybody stands. In the meanwhile there is no reason why our Executive should break all relations with the Communists. Our differences as they arise concretely, in the course of our joint work would, I am sure, be thrashed out and a common understanding achieved, paving the way, at a later stage, for Socialist unity.

Finally, I am afraid that the defection of these comrades from the present lines of the Congress Socialist Party has deeper roots; that it is the outcome of their deviation from Marxism itself. I do not propose to discuss that fully in the present article, but my doubts are confirmed by an article

of Patwardhan, with which I understand the other resigning comrades agree. The article is entitled paradoxically, 'On the Road to Socialism' (*Congress Socialist*, April 9, 1939). In that article the following occurs:

'We should frankly accept Gandhiji as one who has worked out a more effective and humane method of social transformation, a method that is consistent with socialist ideals....

'It is a matter of satisfaction, however, that Gandhiji continues to broaden the scope of this method and we *may hope it will be possible for Gandhism and Socialism in India to evolve in such a way as to make an ultimate blending and synthesis of the two possible*'. (Italics mine)

This, surely, is a far cry from Marxism. Jayaprakash Narayan in his 'Why Socialism?' has an excellent chapter on Gandhism. And this is what he says:

'Gandhiji's views are essentially what in socialist history is known as reformism. Its language is Indian but its substance is international.' (p. 87).

Again Jayaprakash says:

'We find Gandhism to be a serious bog of timid economic analysis, good intentions, and ineffective moralisings.' (p. 92).

Here is the final summing up:

'Gandhism may be a well intentioned doctrine. I personally think it is. But even with the best of intentions it is, I must admit—it gives me no pleasure to do so—a dangerous doctrine. *It is dangerous because it hushes up real issues and sets out to remove the evils of society by pious wishes. It thus deceives the masses and encourages the upper classes to continue their domination.*' (p. 111) (Italics mine)

What a wide gulf between the two points of view. I would seriously commend this chapter to our dissident comrades. In view of the 'broadening scope' of Gandhism as shown at Rajkot, and the drive for 'homogeneity' in the Congress it is well for us all to re-study the essential nature of Gandhism. Our comrades should also tell us whether they agree with the view of Jayaprakash Narayan in this regard. They must also make sure whether they have not deviated from the line of the Congress Socialist Party, which does not permit the dilution of scientific socialism with the mystic cult of Mahatma Gandhi.

98. In Defence of Unity and Struggle: 9 July Demonstrations

National Front, Vol. 2, No. 22, 16 July 1939.

16 July 1939

The anti-Left Wing and anti-struggle resolutions of the Bombay AICC threatened the very unity of the Congress and sought to change the historic course it had been so far pursuing. It was Rightist disruption running riot. It was necessary to resist this mad rush. The Left Consolidation Committee (LCC) fixed 9 July as an all-India Day to call the attention of the masses of Congressmen to the deepening crisis within the Congress and get the leadership to suspend the operation of these resolutions. This act was not a defiance but the defence of the Congress.

A week passed by. Like a bolt from the blue, at the nick of time, came the demand of Rajendra Babu to call off the Day. The President of the Congress did not defend the policy of the High Command and call the masses of Congressmen to express themselves on it. He only attempted to prevent an important section of the Congress from approaching the Congress masses instead. Right disruption is incapable of political defence, it only seeks to enforce. The President's argument was purely formal: it is not open to Congress Committees and its officials to participate in a 'protest' against the decisions of the higher body, they must observe discipline.

Representatives of the Forward Bloc, Socialists, Royists and Communists, constituting the LCC, met and after long and anxious deliberations unanimously decided to carry on with the

preparations for 9 July. It was better to pay the price of discipline and awaken the masses of Congressmen to the gravity of the situation than patiently submit to Rightist disruption.

Immediately after this came Nehru's stab in the back. This was not all. The 9 July morning papers published, along with Nehru's statement, Roy's treacherous appeal to him to get the CSP not to participate in the day's demonstrations. The self-proclaimed 'consistent' Leftist was splitting the Left when it was, for the first time, acting initially on a national scale. The Leftist disruptor of national unity was reduced to becoming a disruptor of Left unity as well. The advocate of 'alternative leadership' was in practice counselling prostration before Right Wing disruption. In the hour of trial, a disruptive political policy which had covered itself with phrases as the 'most Left', stood unmasked as unprincipled opportunism and disruption, pure and simple.

The Royists themselves stood aghast. Where was their 'alternative' leader leading them?

The CSP had not liquidated from within its own ranks and policy of neutrality towards the Right offensive. The dissident Socialists, Masani, Ashok Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan and Lohia called for non-participation despite the decision of their Executive, despite the commitments of their party representatives.

The unity of the Left had been shaken up under the rude attacks from the Right. But from the reports so far received it seems that the response to 9 July demonstrations has been magnificent.

Bombay had two meetings. The Framjee Cowasji Hall was packed to suffocation, no room in the corridors, impossible to climb up the staircase! If it were in Azad Maidan with no rain it would have been packed by 40 thousand, at least, said everybody. Bose read out the resolution and explained in somewhat colourless manner the conflict within the Congress.

Ranadive spoke for the Communists and was repeatedly greeted with thundering applause. He invited the attention on the main enemy, British Imperialism, to fight which the unity of the Congress and the fighting power of the masses needed strengthening and not disrupting as the national leadership sought to do. 'Do you want the Ministries to support the main movement or do you want the masses to stop, their movements so that the Ministries may carry on?... The Congress was our big edge, it needs constant sharpening for struggle and through struggle. If the leadership is allowed to pursue its present course the Congress will become a ladies' parasol'.

The Royists were there in full force despite the mandate of their leader.

Karnik spoke for them and called upon Congressmen to take more active interest in the work of their committees and asked for mass enrolment.

Narayan Swami spoke for the Socialists.

Bose wound up and stated that the Left demanded nothing more than a call for struggle. Let the Working Committee initiate a nation-wide struggle and we would unconditionally line up behind it. True discipline is for struggle, not for preventing it.

In the middle of the meeting Bose read a rabid statement from Horniman wishing the meeting success and then a letter from a technician working in the All-India Village Industries Association but not disillusioned with it and promising to work for the Forward Bloc. One wondered though how such acts could be permissible in a meeting of the United Left.

The working class meeting in Parel was a thumping success.

The BPCC had gone beyond the General Secretary's and the President's statements when it banned even ordinary Congressmen from attending the meeting but in vain.

In Maharashtra the PCC had issued a warning statement and the Socialists announced their intention not to follow the lead of their Party leadership. At Poona the meeting was presided over by the veteran Sane Guruji and addressed by Sardesai and Chitale. The Royists kept aloof. At Sholapur the demonstration was held under local Left Consolidation elements, the Royists joined

up and the meeting was a success despite the rains. Manmad also had its meeting. Ahmednagar held a meeting under Shantabai Kulkarni.

The Nagpur meeting was presided over by the Congress MLA Kedar. The Forward Bloc people brought up Khare as one of the speakers and this was prevented only when the Socialists put their foot down. The President of the Town Congress Committee presided over the Jubbulpore meeting.

Communists, Royists and Socialists all stood together at Cawnpore. Neighbouring Unnao arranged 3 meetings in different Tehsils addressed by Congress MLAs. The united Left functioned as one team at Agra. Congress, Red and Student flags towered over the processionists and the slogans rang out—*Ek ho, jang ka Ailan karo! Parliamentary zahniat ka Khatma ho! Riyasati Andolan Shuru Karo! AICC resolutions wapis lo!* The Saharanpur Leftists, on the initiative of the Socialists, also organized a meeting. Socialists and Communists held a meeting at Lucknow where (Mohan Lal) Gautam proposed the resolution. Aligarh DCC had decided to organize the meeting but Nehru's statement made them hesitate. A meeting of 5 thousand Kisans was, however, held at Atrauli. Allahabad held its meeting Under Manmath Gupta of the Kakori case.

Moulana Nuruddin Bihari, Vice-President of the PCC, presided over the Delhi meeting which was addressed by (Sajjad) Zaheer and (Z.A.) Ahmed but ended in confusion because of the Right disruptors' *Golmal*.

Congress MLA Yajee presided at Patna. Swamiji, the Secretary of the Behar CSP Kishori Sinha, and Benipuri spoke.

The Executive of the Bengal PCC by a majority of 50 votes to 17 lent support to the statement of the LCC. At Calcutta the Albert Hall could not accommodate those who came and people climbed up the ventilators and sat up perched, listening to more than a dozen speakers in a three-hour meeting presided over by Jyotish Ghosh. The resolution was proposed by Bankim Mukherji.

Despite a prohibitive statement from Sidhwa the Leftists, including Socialists, held a successful meeting at Karachi.

The Madras meeting was presided over by A.K. Pillai from the Royists and held under the joint auspices of the CSP, Forward Bloc and the Radical Youth league. The resolution of the LCC was unanimously passed.

In Andhra the Bezwada meeting was held under the joint auspices of the CSO, Press Workers Union, Youth League and Forward Bloc. The procession rang with '*Swatantra Bharat ki jai!*'. Support Kisan and Labour struggles! Save Congress Unity! Meetings and demonstrations were also organized at Tenali, Ellore, Nellore, Cocanada, Kurnool and other places. At Betragunta, the MSM Railway Employees Union branch took the initiative to hold the meeting in the Railway colony.

Kerala had begun its agitation immediately after the Bombay AICC. On 9 July meetings were held at Calicut and several villages.

Despite attempts to create divisions, the Left stood together and on 9 July was able to demonstrate on a mass scale the deep discontent that is welling up among Congressmen against the blind disruptive policy of the Right. At the time of writing M.N. Roy is reported to be pressing his League of Radical Congressmen to jump out of the LCC. Jayaprakash is meeting Gandhiji and discussing how a united Congress can be prepared through the efforts of all Congress men to launch a country-wide mass struggle. The Working Committee members are reported to be discussing drastic disciplinary measures against the Left. Whatever the Working Committee does, efforts for a relentless struggle to maintain the unity of the Congress have not to slacken but need speeding up. Because of the logic of circumstances the first act of the LCC was politically of a negative character, resisting disruption—and not likely to move the majority of the Congressmen who can only be swung over to the path of unity and struggle by a rapid popularization of our

positive tasks to prepare the Congress for the coming battle. It is the supreme task of the Socialists and Communists to take the initiative to prepare for the national offensive week in mid-August proposed by the LCC and thus propagate among the masses of Congressmen the policy of United National Front in a concrete manner, and get them to carry out immediate tasks.

99. Socialists for Composite Leadership: Z.A. Ahmed Explains

Bombay Chronicle, 17 July 1939.

16 July 1939

An emergent meeting of the Congress Socialist Party was held this morning. Z.A. Ahmed presided. Ahmed explained the situation as it has recently developed. Ahmed made it clear that the Socialist Party as such did not stand for alternative leadership in the Congress by overthrowing the present leadership. It was for a composite leadership. Ahmed did not approve of the policy of defying the Congress President's ban on the recent protest meetings. He admitted it was a breach of discipline.

Ahmed said he had, however, participated in the protest meeting at Delhi under peculiar circumstances, and because of previous commitments to the Leftists. He thought such breaches were calculated to intensify internal conflict in the Congress instead of making for united action, for which the Socialist Party stood.

The Socialist Party would do nothing which would destroy the unity of the Congress. Nor could the Socialist Party think of starting any nation-wide struggle without co-operation of the present Congress leadership and its majority. No ultimatum delivered by Leftists could succeed until the whole Congress was behind it. Socialists in future should try, agitate and work within the limits of Congress discipline only, and he hoped the Leftists' Consolidation Committee would reconsider the matter for future guidance.

Regarding M.N. Roy's part in the recent controversy, Ahmed said, although Roy was prepared to fight for alternative Congress leadership, he had curiously enough deserted the Leftist forces in the very first round of the conflict.

100. Leftist Consolidation at Allahabad

Bombay Chronicle, 19 July 1939.

17 July 1939

A representative gathering of all Leftist Organizations here was held last night. Manmathanath Gupta presided. Among those who attended the meeting were Shah Mahomed Fakhri, President City Congress Committee, Shah Abul Faiz, Secretary City Congress Committee, Bhupendranath Sanyal, Member AICC, Padamkant Malaviya, Sajjad Zaheer and several representatives of Kisans and Students Federations.

Harashdeo Malaviya explained the object of the meeting. The President then threw open the question of Leftist organization and programme for debate. Several speakers participated in the discussion.

Sajjad Zaheer laid stress on the struggle in the States and enforcement of the national demand. He said Socialists did not want profits or power; they only desired to intensify the struggle against Imperialism.

Bhupendranath Sanyal suggested that meetings be held in every Congress ward under Leftist auspices whereat the leftist policy be explained and Congress members be enrolled. Sanyal also stressed that the question of Hindu-Muslim unity should be properly tackled.

Padamkant Malaviya thought it was no use sticking to the Gandhian philosophy any more. Gandhism had served its purpose and it was for the Leftists to evolve a new technique of national struggle.

Shah Mahomed Fakhri, President City Congress Committee, opined that Leftists should not violate Congress discipline, but he strongly felt that the revolutionary spirit in the Congress should not be smothered by Parliamentarism. He thought that Provincial Congress Committees should carefully watch the working of Congress Ministries and be able to exercise some control over them. He pleaded for unity between the two wings of the Congress.

Manmathanath Gupta winding up the debate said a certain amount of opposition and public protests against the Congress High Command or the AICC's decisions was inevitable. Discipline was always directed towards some end. There could not be discipline for discipline's sake. The present Congress Command followed in the footsteps of the old bureaucracy. As the bureaucracy always raised the cry of 'law and order' whenever they desired to crush any independent movement, so did the Congress Command who now raised the bogey of discipline. They were not out to condemn Congress Ministries in the same spirit as the Muslim League or Hindu Sabha. Their criticism was made in a sympathetic spirit. Their aim was to strengthen the Congress for national struggle and not to weaken it.

The meeting then resolved to form a Leftist Consolidation Committee at Allahabad. The personnel of the Committee will be announced later.

101. Give Up Hunger-Strike: Rajendra Prasad

Bombay Chronicle, 19 July 1939.

Bombay
18 July 1939

An appeal to the political prisoners, who are on hunger strike in Bengal, to give up their fast, as also to the public and various organizations in the country to exert themselves in order to make the demand of the prisoners irresistible, is made by Dr Rajendra Prasad, Congress President, in the course of a press statement. The following is the text of the statement:

'The hunger-strike of about one hundred political prisoners of Bengal¹ is causing me, as to so many others in the country, much anxiety. Their letters published in the press touched me. My silence so long has not been due to indifference or want of sympathy for them. There can be no doubt that the demand for their release is universal in the country. The release of others like them has not led to any untoward developments and their assurances repeatedly given to Mahatma Gandhi that they abjured violence should be considered sufficient by Government. But Government took different views. The only thing that is now left is to organize public opinion in such a way as to make it irresistible and thus force the hands of the Government. The AICC decided to do that and an all-India Day was observed a short time ago. The Working Committee will consider what other steps can be taken in this connection and I have no doubt that it will do its best.

'But the health of the prisoners is, in the meantime, going down and it appears from the reports that some of them are already in a bad way. I appreciate the feeling which induced them to undertake this hunger-strike, however much I may disagree with the idea of hunger-strike for release. I cannot also help feeling that they need not have resorted to hunger-strike and thus risked their lives, particularly when they are assured that their release will become the cause of one and all. They must not feel that they are not in the service of the cause they have nearest their heart because they are in prison and not able to take active part in the work outside. They should

realize that their lives are valuable and should not be put in jeopardy for the sake of their own release. It should be remembered also that it was the pressure of public opinion which succeeded in securing the release of thousands of detenus and hundreds of political prisoners and the same public opinion is exercising the same pressure and becoming more and more insistent and better organized every moment they are in prison. When there are so many organizations, individuals outside will take up the cause of their release, it is but proper that they should be allowed to exert themselves and the position should not be made more complicated by their fast any longer.

‘While my appeal to the public and various organizations on the one hand is to exert themselves to make the demand irresistible, my appeal to them is to give up their fast and thus avert a grave risk of their lives. I do not know if any appeal from me to the Government will be of any effect. The Government are taking grave risks and a popular Government cannot afford to ignore with impunity the united voice of the people even though it may for the time being command the vote of the Assembly in its favour.’

¹ Political prisoners in Dum Dum and Alipore jails wrote to the Government of India: ‘On the eve of this determined hunger-strike in vindication of our inalienable rights, we cannot but remind ourselves of the fact that persons convicted of political acts before the inauguration of the new Constitution still continue to rot in jails, not only in Bengal but also in other parts of India. Neither we nor the people of India view the question of the release of political prisoners on a regional basis. In view of all the developments that have taken place so far, it hardly needs any emphasis to show that the issue of the political prisoners stands today as an outstanding national issue, notwithstanding all the ingenious attempts on the part of the interested parties to prove it otherwise.’

‘Such being the case, this struggle of ours for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners should be considered as inalienably linked up with the demand of release of all political prisoners remaining in the parts of India other than Bengal.’

102. Release the Prisoners

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20 July 1939.

20 July 1939

We have always insisted that the question of the release of the political prisoners, whether in Bengal or in any other province, should be an all-India issue. The Congress made a mistake when it accepted office without the release of these prisoners. No objection could be taken then as to the legitimacy of this demand, and we believe the British authorities would have been forced to accede to it. But unfortunately the opportunity was lost and the question was allowed to be relegated to the provincial sphere. The position was accepted by the Congress High Command that the Provincial Governments would see to the matter. The number of such prisoners was large in Bengal, and fewer in other provinces, and as the majority of the provinces were working under Congress control, it was thought that the Ministers would find no difficulty in releasing the prisoners, without distinction as to the violent or non-violent brand, if they were so minded. As we know, even in Congress provinces difficulty arose, due to the attitude of the Governors who insisted that the release of the political prisoners was a matter in which, under the constitution, they had a large voice. The Central Government backed them up, and a crisis was avoided by a compromise, in which the Congress Ministries yielded more than the Governors and the Central Government.

As has happened in the past, Bengal’s special case did not receive that amount of attention of the High Command as it deserved. A Congress Coalition Government in Bengal was ruled out by the High Command with what disastrous results we all know. The situation in Bengal today would have been very different had not the Congress acted in this manner. The political prisoners would have been released long ago, there would have been no thought of launching an attack on the

Hindus through the Calcutta Corporation and the Calcutta University, and what is more, the province would have been spared the agony of an intense communal strife.

The High Command failed to take into consideration the baneful effect likely to follow in the wake of the Communal Award in certain provinces. The release of the political prisoners has been comparatively easy in Congress provinces. It has been otherwise in Bengal. The Bengal Ministry has been forced to submit to the influence of Clive Street, to save itself from overthrow. And it is well-known that Clive Street and the Royalists have all along been particularly hostile to the political prisoners. The Ministers know in their heart of hearts that the less than hundred political prisoners could be released without the least fear of anything untoward happening. They know that a far larger number of prisoners, convicted of violent crimes, released by them, have taken to industrial occupations and become non-politicals, and a few who have come back to public life have given no cause for alarm or anxiety. The unreleased prisoners are their comrades, and there cannot be the least doubt that if released they would be useful citizens and would faithfully stand by the pledge they had given to Mahatma Gandhi.

But the conviction of the Ministers does not help them. They find themselves in the toils of their own *Karma*. They are unable to release the political prisoners for political reasons, and the political reasons are that they cannot afford to displease their European masters and allies. If we have recalled the mistakes of the High Command of the Congress in relation to Bengal, it is not because we want to cry over spilt milk but because we feel that we must express the feeling of the people of this province, that the cause of the Bengal political prisoners has not received that measure of attention on the part of the High Command as it should have done. Bengal is indeed grateful to Mahatma Gandhi for his strenuous effort to get the prisoners released. It is out of gratitude to him that the prisoners had given up their hunger-strike on a previous occasion. He has again requested them to abandon the strike, and the Congress President has made the same request. Dr Rajendra Prasad has promised that 'the Congress Working Committee will consider what other steps it should take in this connection,' and he has no doubt 'it will do its best.' Why does he not call an emergency meeting of the Working Committee?

We are at one with Mahatmaji and the Congress President that the political prisoners should consider their lives too valuable to be thrown away or endangered in a hunger-strike. We do not believe that they want to move the hearts of the Bengal Ministers, for the hearts of the latter are not their own; they are in the keeping of the Coalition Party, many members of which are incapable of looking at any question except from a narrow communal angle, and the European group. The appeal of the prisoners is to their own countrymen, and we believe they have come to know how spontaneously Bengal has responded to it. The demonstration of the students and the complete hartal on Sunday last leave no room for doubt that the feeling of the people, masses and classes, has been stirred to the deepest depth.

We agree with the Congress President that the force of public opinion has already Compelled the Bengal Ministry to release a large number of convicted prisoners, despite European opposition. And the same force will make them yield despite that factor. It is only a question of time and we are convinced that the day of the deliverance of the prisoners can not be far off. It will be a bad day for the Ministry if anything happens to any of the prisoners, for the cleavage between them and the people will then be permanent and forces will be let loose which it will be extremely difficult for any Government to control.



103. 'Rightists Afraid of Free Verdict of Delegates?'

M.N. Roy Urges Recurring Crisis

Leader, 28 July 1939 and *Tribune*, 27 July 1939.

20 July 1939

M.N. Roy issued the following statement to the press:

Speaking at Ahmedabad on July 21, Vallabhbhai Patel is reported to have said something which is presumably meant to be a challenge for Subhas Chandra Bose who has of late been demanding that the present leaders of the Congress should make room for others, if they are unable or not prepared to lead the country further in the struggle for freedom. I do not know if Subhas Babu will feel the necessity of taking up the challenge. But, in a sense, the challenge is meant not for any single individual, but for the entire Left wing of the Congress. A fitting answer, therefore, should be forthcoming from that quarter. Meanwhile, it will not be uncalled for me to say a few words on behalf of those Congressmen whose views I claim to represent.

'From the press report, it is difficult to gather what exactly Vallabhbhai Patel did say. The reports vary. The central idea, however, is clear enough. It is that the present leadership of the Congress has no objection to others shouldering the responsibility of leading the national struggle even from today. The entire Left need not be ashamed of this rebuke which really is a ridicule. If the offer was ever made, the shame of not having accepted it belongs to those to whom it was made. I have all along been of the opinion that when, after the re-election of Bose, the working committee resigned, he should have shouldered the responsibility devolved upon him by virtue of his election. Instead of doing that, he chose eventually to resign. Why he acted that way, is not for me to explain. If the offer is repeated today, I would advise the Leftists to shoulder the responsibility of guiding the struggle. Those who would hesitate to do so, would naturally forfeit the right to criticize the present leaders.

'Whatever might have been the nature of previous offers, and to whomsoever they might have been made, on this particular occasion the spokesman of the working committee certainly does not make any clear offer? According to one report, he has said: 'Bring out your programme, and we will step aside.' In another: 'Let any party place its programme before 4,000 delegates by requisitioning a special session of the Congress.' I do not know which of these reports is more accurate. However, it may be presumed that the speaker suggests that a special session of the Congress should be called in order to consider an alternative programme which may be proposed by the Left wing. On the face of it, it is a very plausible proposition, a generous gesture. But in reality it is an empty offer which could not have been made seriously. It is rather a bluff. If a special session is requisitioned by the Leftists, the other party is sure to non-cooperate or even to sabotage. This assertion can be made with no fear of contradiction on the basis of the attitude of the right wing upon the re-election of Subhas Babu. Not having control of the machinery of the Congress, nor being *persona grata* of those who hold the string of its purse, the Leftists are unable to shoulder the financial burden of a special session. It is not fair to ask them to do the impossible while depriving them of much simpler facilities for placing their programme or views on particular issues either before the plenary session of the Congress or the AICC. It is notorious that on none of those occasions the opponents of the established leadership are given a fair chance for presenting their point of view. They can do so only by submitting the so-called non-official resolutions which are taken up at the fag-end of the session and are never given nearly enough time for a thorough discussion. Instead of the impractical proposition of a special session, I suggest the following course of action which should be approved by the leaders if they really want to submit themselves

to a freely expressed democratic verdict of the rank and file. Two resolutions of the last AICC meeting have provoked widespread opposition. Let those two resolutions be referred to the Primary Congress Committees for discussion, with the object of either approving them or recommending their repudiation. The primary committees should be further directed to hold a special meeting of all the members on their rolls with the purpose of ascertaining the general consensus of opinion on the two controversial resolutions, and expressing their own verdict in accordance with that.

'After the *coup d'état* of the right wing during the AICC meeting in Calcutta, the offer for a special session of the Congress coming from that quarter, cannot be taken seriously. If they are not afraid of a free verdict of the delegates, why did they not observe the constitutional provision for letting the delegates elect a new president after the resignation of Sjt Bose? There was no conceivable reason for the indecent haste with which one of their choice was installed in the presidential chair in a not very constitutional and democratic way. Representatives of the opposition were not even allowed the opportunity to press their point of view. Therefore, unless the right wing leaders submit themselves to some form of concrete democratic control, at least on particular issues, their bonafides cannot be taken for granted. The opposition may not yet be in a position to call their bluff, but there are numerous Congressmen who will nevertheless regard it as nothing more serious than a bluff. The right wingers always maintain that those opposed to them are incapable of formulating an alternative programme. Vallabhbhai Patel has once again made that altogether groundless charge. For one thing, the present constitution of the Congress and the procedure of steam-rolling adopted during all sessions of the Congress do not allow anyone to present an alternative programme. All we can do is to move some amendments to official resolutions. Nevertheless, during the last two years, I have on every possible occasion submitted resolutions incorporating an alternative programme and plan of action. I never had the occasion to move them. To refute the groundless charge that no alternative programme has ever been formulated from the side of the Leftists, I shall summarize the propositions that I have been making continuously over the last two years. The motive with which the activities of the Congress ministers should be guided is to dislocate the Imperialist State machinery from within. Legislation necessary for promoting popular welfare should be passed irrespective of the considerations for balancing the budget, enforcing popular demands, the conflict between the popular legislature and the executive machinery of the Imperialist State should be sharpened. Recurring crises should be created by the Congress Ministries resigning. Re-elections should be utilized for mobilizing larger and larger masses in the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of the Congress. On the other hand, Primary Congress Committees should be built up as the units of the revolutionary democratic state which must eventually replace the Imperialist State. After a suitable atmosphere has been created by pursuing systematically and persistently the above policy, and by other forms of extra-parliamentary mass activity, the local Congress committee should be directed to assume the function of Government in their respective localities, and elect delegates to the constituent assembly to frame the constitution of the democratic state of free India.

'There is no reason to believe that there are many people in the AICC or others functioning today in the name of the Congress, who would endorse this programme. But they constitute the basis of the right wing. If the right wing would kindly make place for others only when these would formulate a programme acceptable to themselves, then the retirement would take place not earlier than they do so voluntarily. We are required to do something really impossible, namely, formulate a programme acceptable to the right wing. This no Leftist proposes to do. Our alternative programme is not acceptable to the present leadership of the Congress; therefore, they would not allow it to be placed before the rank and file. If they were so sure that no other programme but theirs will secure the support of the rank and file, why do they place so many restrictions upon the

activities of the ordinary Congressman? The reason is that a revolutionary programme like ours is sure to secure the support of the rank and file, and once that support has been mobilized, the right wing leaders will have to make room for others, not as an act of grace, but under compulsion. Until then, the Left wing should not be provoked by ridicules and unfounded charges. We must work steadily and wait patiently until our day comes.'

104. For Justice's Sake

Bombay Chronicle, 21 July 1939. See also editorial entitled 'Bengal Prisoners', 3 August 1939.

21 July 1939

It is now two weeks since about ninety political prisoners of Bengal went on a hunger-strike in despair of securing by any other means the release of all political prisoners, and several of them are reported to be in a critical condition. Many are known to have been so enfeebled by jail life even before they started their fast that it is extremely doubtful if they can hold out much longer. Gandhiji, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Dr B.C. Roy and several others have appealed to them to give up their fast, promising at the same time to make every possible effort to secure their release. But it is a pity that the huge public meeting held at Calcutta on Sunday last refrained from supporting these appeals, and several speakers strongly resented Gandhiji's disapproval of the hunger-strike. It appears from a letter written by the prisoners to Gandhiji, but not yet received by him, that they wanted to see him before undertaking their fast. It is unfortunate the letter was not promptly despatched to Gandhiji by the jail authorities. For if it had been despatched there would have been some chance of Gandhiji averting the fast. Having read about the letter in the Press Gandhiji has again fervently appealed to them to give up their fast and rely upon him and others to do all they can to secure their release. It is from every point of view the duty of the prisoners to accept this promise and end their fast.

Far more imperative is the duty of the Bengal Government to release the prisoners immediately and unconditionally. If they do so they will have been just as well as merciful. For the prisoners have already suffered long and terribly, the health of several of them having been completely shattered, not to mention those who have succumbed to the agonies of an apparently endless jail life. Having solemnly abjured violence they deserve a chance of serving their country as free men under the new regime. By releasing them Government lost nothing. For if at all any of the released prisoners resort to violent methods, Government have ample powers to bring them to book. In the present circumstances the release of the surviving prisoners can only be a question of days. If they are all immediately released, it will be an anticipation by a few days but will make a world of difference otherwise by saving some precious lives. If, on the other hand, the general release is delayed till death alone releases some of the prisoners, the Government will be the worst sufferers.

The ebbing life of the fasting prisoners forbids passively trusting the Government to be just. Public opinion should be actively organized all over the country, particularly in Bengal because the Government will be most impressed by public opinion in their own province. The All-India Political Prisoners' Day, recently observed in accordance with a resolution of the AICC, has not roused public opinion sufficiently. In his latest statement on this subject the Congress President has announced that the Working Committee will consider what other steps can be taken in this connection. He has already been in touch with Mr Ramkishan Kshetry, Secretary of the All-India Political Prisoners' Release Committee, who is also expected to interview Gandhiji very soon on this subject. We trust the Working Committee will be called forthwith at some place admitting of

easy access to the prisoners. Meanwhile even before Gandhiji joins him, Babu Rajendra Prasad and Mr Sarat Bose may well get into personal touch with the Bengal Government. These negotiations are bound to be fruitful but may take several days. It will be a great advantage and relief to all concerned if meanwhile the prisoners end their fast if only for the time being. Let the prisoners implicitly accept the advice of Gandhiji, the kindest of men and the most powerful champion of righteous causes. And they will never have cause to regret their decision.

105. All-India Day for Release of Politicals: Bose

Bombay Chronicle, 22 July 1939.

Mr Subhas Chandra Bose has issued the following appeal:

‘Since the hunger-strike of the Bengal political prisoners commenced a fortnight ago every patriotic Indian has been following the course of the hunger-strike with excruciating agony coupled with a sense of helplessness. That has been my experience as well.

‘During the last few weeks, I have been moving from place to place on a hurricane tour, but again and again the thought of the political prisoners has come back to me. Again and again have I asked myself what I could do in the way of bringing relief to those, who are now hovering between life and death. I confess that I have not been able to find a satisfactory remedy.

‘I have no influence with the Bengal Government and I can do nothing to help or expedite the prisoners’ release through the Government. If I could do so, then I could have cancelled my tour and rushed back to Bengal at once in order to serve the cause of the political prisoners. The only other thing that I could do and that others have done, was to appeal to the prisoners to give up a course which can only lead to their death. But I know very well that such an appeal would have had no value in their eyes. The prisoners concerned are a body of men of sterling character and iron determination’.

Mr Bose adds: ‘When they have resorted to hunger-strike have done so after mature deliberation and I feel that a appeal to give up hunger-strike will have no effect, unless it is accompanied with such a determined effort on our part to effect their release as will convince them that their release will come soon. I am glad that in Bengal a raging and tearing campaign has been going on for demanding their release but that is not enough. An All-India agitation is necessary and it would have been in the fitness of things if an All-India agitation had been started under the auspices of the Working Committee.

‘As the next best alternative, an All-India agitation should be started by the Leftist Parties in the Congress. An All-India Political Prisoners Day could be observed on the 30th July 1939 at the instance of the Left Consolidation Committee for focussing public attention of this all important issue. On that day meetings could be held all over the country, at which resolutions could be passed demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the political prisoners of Bengal as also of other places. I earnestly hope that when an All-India agitation is on foot it will be possible to persuade the Bengal political prisoners to give up hunger-strike.’¹

¹ For reactions, see Prafulla Chandra Ghose to Rajendra Prasad, 22 July 1939, Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 2-5, 1939, No. 1/17, NAI.



106. CSP in Old Role

Editorial, *Behar Herald*, 25 July 1939.

25 July 1939

Take next the case of the Congress Socialist Party which is another important constituent of the Left Consolidation Committee. This party acted in the most curious manner. In a sense, it acted even more disgracefully than M.N. Roy. Like Roy, it, too, was a consenting party to the decision to observe the 'All-India protest day' as a demonstration against the two resolutions of the AICC. It may be presumed that S.C. Bose might have at least thought twice before throwing the stone at the hive of the dangerous bees had he not been assured of the support of this important group in the Congress. But how did this group translate into actual practice its assurance of support to Bose? Well, the process was hardly less treacherous than that adopted to translate into practice at Tripuri the support so theatrically given by this party to Bose at the fateful presidential election. The big guns of the party kept *chup* (quiet) when the time came for action against the edict of the General-Secretary and the President of the Congress. M.N. Roy proved a traitor but he had at least the courage to mount the house top and declare from there that he was a traitor. But the Congress Socialists who drink at the ethical fountain of Gandhism had not the least scruple to stab Bose at the back with the dagger of silence. Not even one of their big guns did come out with any public statement telling the people that they stood by the Left Consolidation Committee's decision in spite of Congress President's *fatwa*, Pandit Jawaharlal's rebuke and M.N. Roy's disclaimer.

107. 'Saving the Face': The Congress Socialists

Editorial, *Behar Herald*, 25 July 1939.

25 July 1939

It is interesting to recall that four of the biggest guns of the party, Masani, Mehta, Lohia and Patwardhan had resigned or were made to resign from the Executive of the Socialist Party just on the eve of the demonstration as protest against the party joining the Left Consolidation Committee. That was a shrewd enough move to keep up the respectability of the Party and also to keep open the way for the Party as a whole to wriggle out of the alliance at some psychological moment under what might then be shown up as the victory of the seceder within the party organization. Others kept up the tune by studiously refusing to be dragged into the controversy. In CP, leaflets were reported to have been circulated in the name of Acharya Narendra Dev who is *de-facto* President of the Party, calling upon Socialists not to join the function of July 9; but the utmost that the Acharya could be persuaded to do to counteract the false propaganda was to tell some eager questioners in private that he had not issued the leaflets circulated in his name. At Abbottabad in the NWFP province, where Jayaprakash Narayan then was, all that he could be persuaded to do to honour his commitment to the Left Consolidation Committee, was to harp with suspicious repetition on the theme that the CSP did not want a split in the Congress. A provincial unit of the Party, namely, the Maharashtra Congress Socialist Party went the farthest length of passing a resolution actually repudiating the very idea of the observance of the Day. Well, all these were, of course, symptoms of Leftism and more of Left Consolidation against the organized offensive of the Right! The tactics proved wonderful face-saving devices.



108. M.N. Roy's Desertion

Editorial, *Behar Herald*, 25 July 1939.

25 July 1939

The Left in so far as it could be seen during the fateful week, presented a curious spectacle, while claiming to be a powerful motor rushing forward at a terrific speed it looked like a medieval bullock cart being dragged in different and even opposite directions by the elements that were said to constitute it. Even in talks, it proved a veritable Tower of Babel; in action, it presented a sad spectacle of a house divided against itself. Of the details of the programme, its constituents babbled in conflicting terms; there was no unity discernible even in the fundamentals of its ideology. Of the four groups constituting it, the Communist Party did not speak at all. That is, let it be conceded, understandable and even condonable. The Communist Party has no legal existence. It is banned by law and cannot openly function as a party. Its silence thus may be condoned as enforced. But what about others? What about, say, M.N. Roy the arch-radical who, for sometime, has been the most vociferous opponent of Gandhism and the most persistent champion of a change in the leadership of the Congress? Well, it is possible to take a charitable view of his conduct and compare him with the clown in the ancient literature who would accompany their kings on hunting excursion or war with the convincing pose of heroism, but only up to the outskirts of the field of operation to run away at the first sound of the enemy, leaving not only weapons but also the *dhoti* round his waist. The only alternative to taking such a view of his conduct is to place him in the category of the Protases whom history has to present as a warning to the coming generations. Just imagine, this radical running away for fear at the crucial moment of action although he had joined the Left Consolidation Committee after considering all the pros and cons and although later his group had subscribed to the decision to observe July 9 as an All-India protest day. And just think about this double facedness in advocating the observances of the Day as editor of *Independent India* on the same day on which he declares through the daily Press his dissociation from the function and also goes to the length of making an appeal to Jawaharlal to back-blinding! And mark the climax of the tragedy this gentleman can yet talk of radicalization and resolution without provoking a single person to come forward and put him where he ought to be.

109. 'Who are Opportunists?': Bose's Reply to Nehru

Leader, 28 July 1939.

26 July 1939

Members of the Forward Bloc are neither opportunists nor fascists, asserts Subhas Chandra Bose in a Press statement referring to the recent criticism of the Bloc by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Bose says, 'I find from a press report that Nehru, when he was far off in Ceylon, forgot for the time being the mission which took him there and chose to divert his attention to the Forward Bloc. This is not the first time that he has delivered an unprovoked attack on the Bloc. It is a painful task for a Congressman to adversely criticize Nehru but when he goes out of his way to attack fellow-Congressmen one has no option in the matter. Not long ago the Pandit hurled a number of criticisms against the Bloc. Subsequent developments silenced most of these criticisms but he still persists in calling members of the bloc opportunists and fascists. I would ask Panditji in the first place where does he find opportunism and fascism in the programme of the Forward Bloc. I ask him in the second place, to tell us who among the members of the Forward Bloc are either opportunists or fascists. I hope that in all fairness he will either substantiate the charge or withdraw it unconditionally.'

‘The line adopted by the bloc may be right or wrong but it is clear that the line is based on a definite programme and within the bloc there is no room for wobblers. Members of the bloc have to face the wrath not only of British imperialism but of our Congress bureaucracy as well and they also run the risk of being expelled from the Congress. How such men can be called opportunists passes my comprehension. I would rather say opportunists are those who run with the hare and hunt with the hound—those who pose as Leftists and act as rightists—those who talk one way when they are inside the room and in a quite different way when they are outside. As far as fascism, may I ask as to who are fascists? Are those people to be called fascists who are fighting fascism within the Congress and without, or should they be dubbed as fascists who support the present autocratic high command either by openly joining the present homogenous working committee or by secretly joining their deliberations and drafting their resolutions?’

‘The line of opportunism is always the line of the least resistance. The easiest thing for a Congressman today is to side with the majority and tow the ministerial line with or without Leftist slogans in one’s mouth, but joining the Forward Bloc means courting trouble, difficulty and persecution when one could have easy time. If the Forward Bloc is a product of historical necessity and an inevitable stage in our Political evolution, it is bound to forge ahead in spite of our Hamlets, in spite of our sceptics and in spite of our fascists.’

110. Political Prisoners Must be Released: Bengal Muslim Leaders’ Statement

Tribune, 2 August 1939.

Calcutta
29 July 1939

The following statement has been issued under the signatures of Maulvi Abdul Karim, Syed Nausher Ali, MLA, ex-Minister, Bengal, Prof. Humayun Kabir, Nawabzada Syed Husain Ali Chowdhury, Mr Abdur Mansoor Ahmed, Mr Farukul Islam, Mr Abdul Majid, Mr Shamsuddin Ahmed, MLA, ex-Minister, Bengal, Mr Abdul Momin, Mr A.F.M. Nurannabi, Maulana Ahmad Ali, Mr Abu Hosain Sarkar, MLA, Mr Khondkar Abdul Jabbar, Mr Jehangir Kabir, Maulana Altaf Husain, Mr Nurul Amin, Mr Fazlul Buq, Mr Mujibar Rahaman, Mr Kalam Ali, Mr Abdur Samad, Mr Khuda Baksh and others:

‘The hunger-strike of the political prisoners has entered into its fourth week. Nothing can be more regrettable than the attitude of callousness which the Bengal Government has till now maintained. The arguments brought forward on behalf of the Cabinet show a painful lack of sensitiveness of political idealism and also indicate a dangerous failure to realize the depth and extent of feeling aroused by the hunger-strike. A democratic government must reflect the urgency of the people and it shows the utter political bankruptcy to confuse the pressure of public opinion with coercion. To talk of prestige in this connection is futile, for a popular government can have only the prestige which the people give to it. It is prerogative of a popular government to yield to popular demand and it can defy such pressure only at the cost of negating its own character.

‘It is, therefore, a travesty of fact to suggest as has been done on behalf of the Cabinet that it has the support of any section of Indian opinion behind it in its refusal to release political prisoners. The adjournment motion of the Assembly was interpreted as a vote of confidence by the Ministry, but even its supporters made it clear that they desired to release all political prisoners even though they might do anything which might turn the Cabinet out. Even the organ of the most communal section of Bengal Muslims declared that it desired the immediate release of political prisoners.

The sober and moderate Muslim majority of Bengal have the same desire, and further feel that the cabinet by its attitude and action is unnecessarily creating discontent and tension and endangering the order and tranquility of the province.

‘It is now time that the progressive Muslim opinion of the country should express itself in unequivocal terms upon this question. We are convinced that the Bengal Cabinet had first assumed office by unconditionally releasing all political Prisoners. We have heard it said that in the early days of the present Cabinet the Ministers had on one occasion, when the then Governor was absent, unanimously decided to release all political prisoners. But later on when the Governor, Sir John Anderson, wanted the question to be re-opened they went back on their first decision and submitted to the dictation of the Governor and his bureaucracy.

‘The Cabinet had another chance of capturing public imagination when they released a large number of detenus through the intervention of Gandhiji. The detenus had to be released in the end, and the Cabinet, by their hesitation and slowness, only lost the credit which they would have, otherwise, won of vindicating their position by releasing all political prisoners and the extremely generous offer of Mr Subhas Chandra Bose has gone a long way towards assuring them about a point on which they might, not unnaturally, feel some diffidence. Mr Bose has said that “if the Bengal Ministry meet with opposition from HE the Governor of Bengal or the Government of India and if they resign over this issue, the Congress party will do all that is possible to prevent any other Cabinet from being formed and in no case will the Congress party think of stepping into the vacant offices. Further, if the present ministry happen to lose the support of the European group as a result of the policy of immediate and unconditional release of the political prisoners, the Congress party will not try to take advantage of the situation and will not use it for the purpose of ousting the present ministry from office”. Mr Subhas Chandra Bose guarantees them their position, and this should enable them to stand up for a point of view which has secured a unanimity of Indian support. It is not necessary to talk of election pledges in this connection. All Parties during elections pledged themselves to the repeal of repressive laws and release of political prisoners. But, apart from political considerations, even on purely humanitarian grounds Mussalman public opinion must now express itself unequivocally on this point. We are confident that in spite of differences of political ideology, all Mussalmans with one voice say that the political prisoners of Bengal must be released.’

111. Political Prisoners Release: National Mobilization

National Front, Vol. 2, No. 24, 30 July 1939.

The protracted hunger-strike of 89 political prisoners in Alipore and Dum Dum jails has cast a gloom over the country. The hunger-strike has already entered the fourth week. Sixty three hunger-strikers have been admitted to the Hospital. The condition of the several hunger-strikers is precarious.

The call of the Congress President for a nation-wide mobilization of public opinion to force the hands of the Bengal Government and to effect the release of the brave patriots has not come one day too early. The suggestion of the Rashtrapati calling for a continuous agitation by holding meetings on different days and at as many places as possible is most welcome. We appeal to every Congress Committee in every city, town and hamlet to hold at least one meeting immediately during the next week.

But apart from these preparatory meetings, we feel it necessary to fix up one All-India Day to demonstrate that the united will of the entire nation stands behind the demand for the immediate release of these fighters for our country's freedom. We appeal to Rashtrapati to fix the 30th of July

as the All-India Political Prisoners' Day. We agree that the time for preparation is short but the urgency and the seriousness of the situation is equally great. The entire country is astir and we assure the President that the response of the Nation to his call would be instantaneous and worthy of the National Congress.

The supreme sacrifice which these noble countrymen of ours are determined to make should lash us into activity. It is a rude reminder to us that the last batch of the prisoners of the last war of freedom, is still rotting in jails. Together with the Bengal prisoners brave Chandra Singh of the Garhwali Rifles, who refused to fire on the people, and Comrades Gurumukh Singh and Prithwi Singh of the First Lahore Conspiracy case are still in jail. Why? The reason is clear. We have not yet exerted our maximum strength to obtain their release.

Undoubtedly through the pressure of the Congress Ministries backed by the power of the masses we have secured the release of 2000 Bengal detenus and several hundred prisoners in other provinces. We hoped to secure the release of this last batch through negotiations. We stopped agitation in pursuance of the appeal of Mahatma Gandhi. We secured the release of a hundred brave prisoners. But now the limit is reached. Imperialism will not release the last batch. Once again the Nation must rouse itself and raise its powerful arm to rescue them from jail. It is not merely a question of the freedom of a few individuals. It has now become a question of the prestige of the whole nation, of the National Congress. The Congress fought the elections and entered the ministries with the grim resolve to secure the release of every one of our patriots in jail without any distinction. We have not accomplished the task. The self-imposed agonies which our brothers are suffering in jail must rouse us to action.

The time has now come for the Nation to make the supreme effort to secure the release of the last of the prisoners. Mere nation-wide agitation and demonstrations would not suffice. We shall have to tell the powers that be in plain words that the National Congress will be forced to precipitate a constitutional crisis on this issue. The good name of the Congress is at stake. We, therefore, request the Congress President and the Working Committee to take up this question.

Let the Working Committee make it an all-India issue and demand of the Central Government that every remaining political prisoner be released whether in Bengal, UP or in the Punjab.

Let the Working Committee make it plain to the British Government that if this demand is not conceded the Congress will be forced to take the extreme step of precipitating a constitutional crisis.

P.C. Joshi B.T. Ranadive
G. Adhikari S.A. Dange¹

¹ Shripat Amrit Dange (1899–1991); became interested in politics while a student; his 1920 pamphlet, *Gandhi versus Lenin*, attracted the attention of M.N. Roy and the Communist International; under the patronage of a wealthy Bombay flour-mill owner, and with advice from M.N. Roy, he helped organize Marxist study groups and publish Marxist tracts; one of the founders of the CPI, editor of its first important paper, and a defendant in both the Cawnpore and Meerut Conspiracy Cases; main center of activity was among the trade unions of Bombay; was either president or general secretary of the AITUC since 1945; spent at least thirteen years in jail and several more years underground, and made many trips abroad to attend international Communist gatherings; regarded as a Leftist within the Party, although he helped to remove the Leftists from control during the Ranadive–Rao periods, and favored participation in the general elections; elected to the Bombay legislative assembly in 1948, defeated in the parliamentary election of 1952, but elected to Lok Sabha in 1957 with the largest vote polled by a single candidate in all India; leader of the Communist bloc in parliament; author of numerous pamphlets and articles on trade unions and on other subjects; except for the period 1950–51, he was a member of the CPI Central Committee since the founding of the party.



112. Cement Left Unity

Editorial, *National Front*, 30 July 1939.

30 July 1939

The most heroic of our hostages with Imperialism, the political prisoners of Bengal, continue their hunger-strike. Their daily agonies are a cruel reminder of our own slavery. The Imperialist bureaucracy and its henchmen continue to keep them to chains. We cannot rescue them from imperialist dungeons without mass mobilization of the nation, without the whole Congress beating the war-drum. Their ringing call is the same.

This is not what is happening. After an attempt in the Bombay AICC to suppress the forces of struggle, the national leadership is thinking of splitting the unity of the Congress, of taking disciplinary actions against the entire Left leadership, for organizing the 9 July demonstration of Congressmen in defence of the policy of unity of the Congress and for a united struggle through it.

Despite the heart-rending call from within prison-walls, of the best and truest of our land, the national leadership shows no signs of giving up the path of disruption, of realizing the strength of the masses, of leading the nation into action. For them it is not British Imperialism that is the main enemy but we, of the Left, their own flesh and blood, members of the same Congress.

Sardar Patel, in his Ahmedabad speech, on the anniversary of the Prohibition Campaign, refuses to believe that the people are ready for struggle. Acharya Kripalani continues to issue cynical statements sneering at composite leadership and points to differences in the camp of the Left as good jokes.

The European situation continues to worsen, every day, every hour people there are being forced to get used to a nerve-shattering chronic war-crisis and await their doom in a world conflagration.

Never before was the need for clear-thinking and bold leadership greater. But our leadership refuses to lead. Every fighter in the national movement is looking towards the Left Consolidation.

The rapidly developing situation, the lightning offensive from the Right is producing its inevitable reactions in the camp of the Left too, where confusion rather than clarity prevails.

Royists have Left the Left Consolidation Committee. Having no worthwhile base in the mass movement, relying for the success of their line on winning over dissatisfied Congress functionaries by Left phrases and organizational intrigues within Congress Committees, they turned their tail when it came to a test of their Leftism, when their tiny group ran the danger of coming under the disciplinary axe. Royism stands unmasked as a policy of unprincipled disruption. They had an alternative 'Left' lead to disrupt the unity of the Congress. But when it came to fighting actual disruption from the Right they ended by disrupting the unity of the Left. It is their own end, ignominious and bleak.

The Forward Bloc, led by a person of the eminence of an ex-President of the Congress, is not suggesting an effective course of action to Congressmen but is itself straying. We had hailed Bose as a Rashtrapati who had pledged himself to the line of immediate struggle and the policy of broadest unity of our national forces. He fought for it against odds. His success came as a result of the united efforts of all Lefts. The Right scented a challenge to its own domination and opened a terrific drive against the rising Left. Throwing out Sjt Bose from the Presidential Chair was their first stroke.

A critical period followed. Would the Left seek to mobilize the majority of Congressmen and isolate the disruptive Right from its own base, or only cross swords with the Right leadership, their rival following arrayed as warring hosts witnessing a duel? Would the Left follow the policy of positive action or get side-tracked into negative opposition?

Bose in his correspondence with Gandhiji had stood out for a united leadership and for immediate preparations for a nation-wide struggle. It is true there was also mention of 'civil war in the Congress.' Civil war, while there is yet time, when they themselves are at the top in the line of the Right disruptors. It would be playing the game of the Right if any important section of the Left fell a victim to provocation.

In most of his meetings Bose has been concentrating not on the policy of struggle against Imperialism but riveting their attention to conflict within the national front and calling upon them to join the Forward Bloc which will change the shape of things. This becomes merely a line of Left Opposition. This is an expression of the 'civil war' mentality. It comes to the fore as a blind reaction to the disruptive moves of the Right but does not help to win over the masses of Congressmen who are under the influence of the Right and in fact leaves them to their fate and only isolates the Left from them. This is the way to become a party to civil war and split the unity of the Congress.

The logic of the line of Left Opposition to Right leads inevitably to forming an anti-Right combination and compromising one's own Leftism.

Bose has been denouncing the Bombay Ministry for taking police measures against the Hyderabad Satyagrahis. It is true that no Congress Government has any business to do so. It is the task of a Congressman, however, not only to protest against it but also sharply demarcate himself from the Arya Samajist Satyagraha which disrupted the struggle launched by the State Congress. Bose failed to do so. The Right is able to charge him for seeking the support of communalist elements. When he criticizes the Congress Ministry for suppressing civil liberties it is his bounden duty to point out that if the supreme organization at the people, the National Congress, suspends struggle such disruptive communal elements are able to come out as champions of democratic rights.

Similarly about the anti-Hindi agitation. Rajaji's Ministry disgraces the Congress by using the hated Criminal Law Amendment Act. But it would not do to forget that the opposition to Hindi is 'trumped up by anti-Congress loyalist Justices'. Criticizing Rajaji is not enough. One must equally strongly denounce the anti-Hindi agitation as a deliberate move to discredit the Congress and show that the way to defeat it is by mobilizing Congress Committees for a hurricane campaign to popularize Hindi and supporting it with the resources of the Government and speeding up social legislation which will expose the true character of reactionary Justices—big landlords and fat capitalists. Failure to do so is opening the flank to the charge of seeking to win the support of anti-Congress extreme Right reactionaries against the Right Congress leadership.

A clear expression of this oppositional line was Bose's statement on Prohibition which staggered the whole Left, including the members of the Forward Bloc. Such an oppositional line does not help but harms the cause at the Left.

For the Socialists at least it is necessary to understand what renders possible such serious lapses. Left nationalism which is the basis of the Forward Bloc, differentiates itself from nationalism, which is the basis of the whole Congress, only by being its more militant expression and nothing more. In a period of stress and storm political clarity can emanate only from Socialism, the most scientific and really revolutionary ideology.

When there is an attack from a section or the nationalists, the Left nationalists, on their own can only take up a negative political stand, follow an oppositional direction. That is all.

Any further development along this line will not only make the Forward Bloc good mince-meat for the Right disruptors but disrupt the Left Consolidation itself, for Socialists and Communists could be no parties to it.

The responsibilities of the Socialists have grown immensely. But the CSP continues to remain a house divided. After the decision of their Party to join the Left Consolidation, after the endorsement by their Executive to organize 9 July Masani, Asok Mehta, Lohia and Achyut Patwardhan give a call for keeping aloof. After 9 July Asok Mehta writes an article in the non-Party nationalist press against 9 July. This is the policy of neutrality before the Right offensive. CSP has grown to what it is inside the Congress, because it gave political leadership to the Left. But the above is the surest way to hand over the Left to 'Left' disruption and itself become a Centre party. It is not even good Leftism, let alone Socialism.

This 'non-violent' 'neutral' Socialist trend is boosted up as 'genuine' brand by the *Times of India* and the *Statesman*. The imperialist Press suggests to the Right drastic organizational measures against the Socialists and Communists who 'stir up troubles' among the masses. The venom is concentrated against the Communists.

We Communists tell the Left nationalists: Unity of the Left is necessary today as before and more; but the basis of that unity is to fight to preserve the unity of the Congress, and prepare for a national struggle....

113. 9th July Demonstration: Is it the Parting of Ways?

Article by Somnath Lahiri, *National Front*, 30 July 1939.

30 July 1939

The ninth of July, 1939, marks the beginning of a new era in the struggle of the Indian people for freedom.

It marks the beginning of the unity in action and on a mass scale between the forces of Left nationalism and the forces of the proletariat and the peasantry. It demonstrates in actual practice for the first time in Indian history, the beginning of a determined and united struggle by the nationalists and the forces of the proletariat and the peasantry for carrying forward the imperishable revolutionary heritage of our great National Congress.

The ninth of July was fixed for protesting against the anti-struggle and disruptive decisions of the AICC regarding satyagraha and the functioning of the Congress Ministries. The General Secretary of the Congress had banned the demonstration. The President had almost threatened expulsion of those who would participate in it. Even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had lined up with the authorities in crying down the idea of a protest. And at the last moment there was the tragic picture of Mr M.N. Roy, the champion of revolt against all authoritarian leadership, turning his tail.

Yet we get reports of crowded protest meetings at Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Cawnpore, Delhi, Patna and various other places. Wherever the local Leftists could muster courage to call a meeting the public responded overwhelmingly. Almost everywhere the resolution of the Left Consolidation Committee was passed unanimously.

This was the first political action by the Left Consolidation Committee, that is, by the consolidation of the Socialist and Left nationalist forces. And considering the limits within which it had to work, the action was a great success.

Where Does it Lead?

It is necessary to evaluate and justify it politically. To Pandit Nehru and to the leaders of the Right Wing it is the beginning of the disruption of the Congress and to some over-enthusiastic sections of the Left, too, it means the beginning of the parting of the ways.

Heritage

There is very little to add to the effective reply given by the Left Consolidation Committee to the Right Wing leaders and Pandit Nehru.

To the Congress, struggle is the very breath of its life. Congress today is enshrined in the hearts of our toiling, slaving millions. Congress today stands out as the embodiment of their aspirations just because Congressmen have always fought in the forefront of all their partial and national struggles. The masses, in their struggles, have drawn inspiration from the fighting heritage of the Congress—they have identified the Congress with the struggle for their aspirations. It is this alone which is building up the unity of the whole nation within the Indian National Congress.

Struggle

The people of India are crushed down every moment of their life under the iron heel of imperialism and the vested interests. Every day that passes brings the people out into elemental revolt against these oppressions. And Congressmen, who want the Congress to achieve its ideal have to encourage and boldly associate themselves with these spontaneous struggles, develop and mould them into an all embracing national struggle. If they hesitate to do so, Congress loses all its influence over the masses.

The AICC ban on Satyagraha, instead of encouraging Congressmen to be in the forefront of every popular struggle, puts obstacles in the way of their participating in it, and thereby deprives the Congress of its motive power. It not only lowers the prestige of the Congress in the eyes of the masses, but militates against the very fundamental basis of struggle which has progressively unified the nation inside the Congress.

The subservience of Congressmen and even Provincial Congress Committees to the Congress Ministries does the same harm. It takes away the initiative from the Congress, people and their elected representatives and makes them mere tools in the hands of the Ministries. By banning public criticism it seeks to bolster up the reformist and bureaucratic tendencies growing inside the Congress Ministries.

Why Protest?

Therefore, in order to defend the revolutionary traditions of the Congress every genuine Congressman has to protest against the decisions and to carry the struggle against these reactionary decisions to the final authority—the tribune of the people. The very existence of the Congress as the people's united organization demands it and it is the elementary democratic right of every Congressman to do so.

Discipline

Discipline is the observance of the rules that have been framed to achieve the ideals of an organization. It can never be used to hamper the achievement of the ideal itself. If at any time the rules come in conflict with the ideal, either the rules have to be changed to suit the ideal or, the organization in which the rules become a dead weight on the ideal bursts asunder.

Panditji would not let us interpret the rules in the light of the exigencies of the mass struggle. He would invoke disciplinary action against us; he would like the rules to act as a dead weight on all that has made our Congress the National Congress.

The policy of the Right Wing is intelligible. Their tendencies of compromise lead them to the policy of drift and reformism and in order to defend this policy against the growing forces of struggle they are led to disrupt the forces of struggle.

But Panditji is not the same type. He typifies petty-bourgeois vacillation. Under the influence of radical and proletarian tendencies he gives positive slogans of unity and of conceding the demands of the masses. But as soon as this means a determined struggle for these things, his old moorings catch at him, he crumbles up before the Right Wing offensive and lines up with them in preserving 'discipline'. Therefore, he has nothing positive to do (except some halting and mild criticism) when the national demand resolution is put into the waste paper basket, when the new technique delivers up the heroic States people to the tender mercies of their rulers, but he rushes in defence of Right Wing disruption as soon as that disruption is sought to be fought on a mass scale.

Panditji is proud of his socialism. But no Socialist can be proud of it.

Hope of Compromise

What is the situation inside our national front today? The Indian people, even the bourgeois (the upper) class have very little to expect from Imperialism today. The insistence on the present scheme of Federation, the recent bills in the Parliament to take away even provincial autonomy for Imperialism's war purposes, the passing of the Indo-British Trade Pact in the teeth of vehement opposition from all classes—all these tend to show that neither the bourgeoisie nor any other class, as yet, stand to gain anything by way of compromise. Of course, Imperialist manoeuvre seeks to create the illusion of the possibility of a compromise and our national leadership representing the upper classes, is thereby deluded into a tendency of compromise and passivity. But the fundamental opposition to Imperialism remains. The more we can develop and extend local struggles and shatter the illusion of a compromise the more is there the likelihood of uniting all the classes for a struggle against imperialism.

The Disruption

On the other hand the forces of mass discontent and the growingly successful participation of the radical forces, including the proletariat in the national struggle, constitute a mighty challenge to the hitherto undisputed leadership of the upper classes over the national movement. Their rapidly slipping hold over the masses makes them try to check the forces of struggle by squeezing out the Left and obstructing local struggles.

But the determining factor at this stage remains, as before, the opposition to Imperialism. Therefore, not only a Socialist but everyone who stands for an uncompromising struggle has to take advantage of this basic factor with the immediate slogans of the national united front and united leadership, and simultaneously has to fight out in practice every practical expression of the tendency of compromise and disruption which seeks to retard the struggle itself.

Fight for Unity

On the 9th when the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee decided to participate in the protest, some ultra Leftists hailed it as the beginning of the parting of the ways, and visualized the prospect of the BPCC going on defying the Congress discipline. But this is a mis-appreciation of the situation, it is just as harmful as the disruptive move of the Right Wing. Those who have organized the protest have done so in the best interest of the Congress and have fought in actual practice disruption that was active. Even if they are punished in the name of discipline they will not think of going out of the Congress or creating a parallel Congress, but will gladly submit to its discipline and continue the Congress struggle from the ranks of the masses.

If they remain true to the ideals of unity and struggle no discipline on earth can remove them from the masses. The prevention of a disastrous parting of the ways at this stage depends exactly

on how we ourselves are able to move the entire nation with us. The Left Consolidation has been the first step towards our unity. That step has produced a country-wide response to our fight against disruption inspite of the heavy odds against us. The next call of the Left Consolidation is for the National Week from August 12. Whether the whole nation will be able to read the path in a new way or there will be disastrous division will depend on how we are able to put these positive political campaigns into effect.

114. 9th July Demonstrations

National Front, 30 July 1939.

30 July 1939

In *NF* No. 23 of 16th July, we published some earlier reports of 9th July demonstrations. We publish below reports of places which have subsequently reached our office, Cawnpur. From the press it appeared that all Lefts participated in the demonstration. We learn now that the local Royists hold aloof after the publication of Roy's statement. The organizers of the meeting evinced great foresight in taking the necessary precautions to see that the demonstration was not exploited by anti-Congress elements, nor understood to be such by citizens in general. They issued an appeal explaining the purpose of the day and on 9th July, from early morning, through a dogged campaign they covered the whole city explaining in simple short sentences their object in organizing the Day. They were amply rewarded. No Congressman had any objections against the sober manner in which the Day was actually celebrated. Not more than half a dozen leading Congressmen held aloof from the meeting. The Tilak Hall was never so packed as on this occasion.

The DCC had already met the previous night and passed a resolution requesting the Working Committee to revise the resolution that go to weaken the Congress itself, but the DCC also instructed Congressmen not to participate in the meeting because of the statements from the top. The Ward Offices were also instructed to post notices in their respective offices to the same effect.

ANDHRA. Meetings were also held at Kurnool, Anantpur, Vizagapatnam, Nandyal, Musulipatnam, Pithapuram, Guntur, Coconada, and in several villages like Kolavennu, Zamingolvepalli, Somavaram, Rudravaram, Veerulapadu, Lankala koderu, Jennur, Chekur, etc. In some places the local Rightist leaders came to the meetings, spoke against the LCC. Resolution which was passed by an over-whelming majority.

BENGAL. At Pabna all the Leftists held together. Jalpaiguri held a meeting in the Congress office itself. The Kisan and Congress workers of Nabadwip held a successful meeting at Paramatola. At Barisal the Aswini Kumar Hall was packed to suffocation despite rains, and Batliwalla spoke. In Dacca district all the Congress Committees of Narsingdi Sibpur, Raipura, and Manohardi thanas observed the Day. Congress workers of Jessore held a meeting in Gandhi Park. In the Hoogly District, meetings were held at Serampore, Begumpore, Tarakeshwar, Baidyabati, Uttarpara and Hoogly Town, either under the auspices of the Local Congress Committees or the Left Consolidation. A significant feature of the demonstrations in Bengal was the additional demand for the release of political prisoners and the realization that the existence of Kisan prisoners in Congress provinces weakened the strength of their demand.

AMROTI. Held its meeting under the auspices of Berar Kisan Sabha and with the full cooperation of local Socialists.

CACHAR had organized a huge demonstration and a meeting held under the auspices of all Left and progressive organizations. Vice President of the DCC presided.

SINDH. Besides Karachi, meetings were organized at Tando Jam, Tanio Adam, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Sukkur.

115. Strange Leadership

Independent India, 30 July 1939.

30 July 1939

Any dissatisfaction with, or criticism against, the present leadership of the Congress is met with the thundering reminder that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead India to her salvation. But Gandhiji himself is constantly letting down his blind followers. Confronted with every baffling problem, he declares that he should not be expected to do the impossible. That is exemplary moral courage and should be admired only as such. But it is also an admission of the inability to discharge the responsibility of leading India to her salvation. The other day, he washed his hands off his self-assumed responsibility for securing the release of the political prisoners or Bengal by declaring that he could not do the impossible. A few days later, he confessed his inability to solve the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity. On the same occasion, he is reported to have declared: 'Without Hindu-Muslim unity India could not attain freedom. The greatest mission of my life is to attain Hindu-Muslim unity. I have been tackling this problem for several years. But all my efforts so far have proved abortive. It is beyond my power to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity.' Hindu-Muslim unity is the essential condition for the freedom of India; he, who is believed to be the only person destined to lead India to freedom, confesses his inability to create that condition. What shall we do in this position? Those seriously wanting freedom, provided that they are not handicapped by the blessing of blind faith, must say: let us look for another leadership. Gandhiji himself should advice them to do so. But his advice is different. He wishes the country to wait patiently until providence will give him the power to achieve his long cherished objective by miracle. 'I hope that, if providence wishes, then alone will I be able to achieve the long-cherished objective.' With all his sincere zeal for establishing Hindu-Muslim unity Gandhiji himself has prejudiced the cause of that unity by introducing religion in politics. He is believed to have spiritualized politics. In other words, the introduction of religion into politics is celebrated as his greatest achievement. With all his religious cosmopolitanism his religion does not appeal to the orthodox Muslims. And that precisely is the main cause which keeps the religious Muslims away from the Congress. Of course, there are exceptions. But it is an undeniable fact that the dissension between the two great communities is fomented by exploiting religious fanaticism. So long as the Congress will insist on identifying Nationalism with Gandhism, it will find the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity baffling.

116. Left Wing in Muslim League: Hasrat Mohani's Move

Bombay Chronicle, 31 July 1939.

30 July 1939

A move is afoot, on the initiative of Maulana Hasrat Mohani, to form a Left Wing Party in the All India Muslim League. It will be recalled that Mr Mohani interested himself in the newly formed League of Radical Congressmen, under Mr M.N. Roy's leadership, shortly after his arrival from England.

Since his arrival in Bombay, his proposal to form a Left-Wing in the Muslim League has met with enthusiasm from the younger progressive members who will shortly meet to discuss the preliminary steps in this connection.

In the course of an appeal in this connection Mr Mohani states: 'We are sure that you share the view that the progress and prosperity of the Muslim masses require freedom from the yoke of foreign Imperialism as well as all other forms of oppression and exploitation. But unfortunately,

that does not seem to be the opinion of the top leaders of the Muslim League. While exploiting the religious sentiments of the Muslim masses, they are pursuing a policy not at all calculated to achieve real political freedom and economic emancipation for the Muslim masses.

‘By virtue of its resolution adopted at Lucknow, the Muslim League is committed to a revolutionary programme; yet many of its leaders pursue a loyalist policy which pre-supposes that as a minority community, Indian Muslims cannot dispense with the protection of British Imperialism. This policy is antagonistic to the future welfare of the Muslim masses who today support the Muslim League. Therefore numerous members of the League do not approve of this policy and are eager to mobilize the Muslim masses in the struggle for political freedom and economic emancipation. But due to the absence of coordinated activity, they have not until now been able to influence the policy of the League. All the progressive members of the League must have felt this weakness more or less keenly, and wish to remove it. We have reached the opinion that, if the situation continues as at present, not only the common cause of India’s freedom will be prejudiced, but great harm will be done to the Muslim community itself.

‘Alarmed by this perspective, and eager to prevent the mischief, we propose a meeting of progressive and radical Muslim Leaguers from different provinces for the formulation of an effective plan of co-ordinated action. We presume that you approve of the plan and will accept our invitation. The next step proposed is an All India Conference with the object of forming a Radical Group inside the Muslim League. The conference will announce the objects of the Radical Group and prepare its plan of action. It is proposed to hold the conference as soon as possible.’

117. League of Radical Congressmen

‘All India Session of the League of Radical Congressmen’, *Forward*, July 1939.

July 1939

The first All India Conference of the League of Radical Congressmen concluded at which speeches were delivered by H.V. Kamath, Makhanlal Sen, Bhupendra Sanyal, Mahajani and Karnik and resolutions already passed at the private session of the delegates were presented and explained. M.N. Roy concluding the conference declared that in view of what transpired at the Bombay conference of the Forward Bloc, there was no question of League members joining the Forward Bloc for it has fallen far short of Radical League’s expectations and all that the latter was prepared to do now was to cooperate with the Forward Bloc to concrete individual issues on which they agreed.

Proceeding, Roy traced the recent crisis in the Congress arising from the presidential election and prevailing conflict and regretted that when the victory was theirs by virtue of a clear verdict of the rank and file of the Congress, Leftists had failed to grasp the opportunity and voluntarily capitulated in favour of Rightists. It was due, in the opinion of Roy, to want of a clear perception of the implications of the present conflict. Certain sections of Leftists still believed that there was room for compromise between the two wings of the Congress whereas in fact the Rightists had set their face against it. ‘We are at parting of ways. Let us not waste time in temporizing and arguing at the crossroads trying to embrace each other. Let us follow our independent ways,’ said Roy.

He severely criticized the demand for ‘composite’ leadership which term he characterized as absurd, meaningless and impracticable. The only practicable leadership was a homogeneous leadership.

Roy attacked the non-violence creed which he said could never bring complete independence on account of its inherent limitations. Hence the Congress had lowered its goal to the substance of independence and discarded the revolutionary ideal and resorted to reformism and ministerialism.

It would be the function of the League of Radical Congressmen to rehabilitate the revolutionary ideal and work for it. The following personnel of the Consolidation Committee has been announced: Subhas Chandra Bose, convener and leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev, M.N. Roy, Yusuf Mehrally, Swami Sahajanand, N.G. Ranga, Bhupen Sanyal, P.C. Joshi, Bharadwaj, Satyaranjan Bakshi, B.D. Tripathi, Somnath Lahiri and V.B. Karnik. The Committee fixed 12 to 19 August next as the National Struggle Week during which popularization of the national demand, Hindu-Muslim unity, boycott of British goods, organization of volunteer corps, etc. will be emphasized. The Head Office of the Committee will be at Calcutta.

IV. LEFT CONSOLIDATION

118. Through Socialist Initiative to National Unity

Editorial, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 3 August 1939.

August 1939

Since we wrote last, the world has witnessed breath-taking events one after another. Europe perpetually hovers on the brink of an aggressive war. The Fascist coup against Danzig, against Poland which was to be another prelude to totalitarian conquest, is not yet defeated. It is only delayed and postponed. Hitler's hordes are merely biding their time to secure another victory against democracy, against the democratic will of the peoples.

Driven by popular pressure, Chamberlain is forced to open negotiations with the Soviet for a peace pact. But he successfully prolongs the negotiations and refuses to come to terms with the USSR. He hoodwinks the British people who demand united resistance to Fascism. In secret, Chamberlain's underlings plan another diabolical plot, to strengthen Fascism by offering it a huge loan and raw materials, which Nazi Germany is sure to utilize for intensifying its war against democracy.

Taking advantage of the European situation, Chamberlain has taken the first step to plan out one of the biggest and most sinister betrayal in history. The sell-out of fighting and democratic China to marauding Japan is the latest fruit of Chamberlain's policy. Everywhere Fascism scores on the basis of national disunity. Everywhere the pro-Fascist gangs are able to prevent the victory of popular will by creating dissensions, confusions and disappointments. Everywhere the same lesson is taught. Unless the working class and its parties are able to unite the entire people in a common front against Fascism and for democracy, people must pay the price.

India is no exception to this general rule. The common sentiment of opposition to British Imperialism is no longer enough to keep national unity. Everything now depends on how effectively and immediately this opposition takes material shape. Delay in the counter-offensive of the people against British domination, whatever may be the excuse advanced, means abject capitulation before British power, means disintegration of the national forces. It means playing the same role which German Social Democracy played on the eve of the Fascist seizure of power.

The Indian scene shows the same vacillations, the same urge of the masses to move forward, the same secret plotting against the people, and finally the same lack of unity.

Determined to draw India into its war plans, British imperialism follows a policy of blood and iron, on every front unparalleled repression is launched. The States' peoples' struggle is crushed with the utmost ferocity; political prisoners are not released, but are allowed to die in jail, despite the united popular demand for their release; pressure is brought on the Congress Ministries to suppress the workers' and peasants' struggles and compel them to form a 'common front' with Maxwell & Co.

At the same time Imperialism follows its war-preparations with lightning rapidity. India is already converted into a base for its war-designs. Troops are freely transported to Middle East, to guard the interests of Imperialism. The Indian Air Force is strengthened by the addition of new bombers.

The Federation Conspiracy which forms a plank in the Imperialist war-programme is pursued with unabated vigour. The Princes are alternately blackmailed and cajoled to join the common front against the Indian people.

In this grave and menacing situation, the National Leadership pursues its relentless course of compromise and vacillation. Instead of organizing a national counter-offensive and stemming the rot, the High Command forbids militant mass movements. Congress Ministries repress the growing urge of the people to struggle. Every manifestation of mass discontent is suppressed with bureaucratic high-handedness.

This policy of capitulation found its crassest expression when the Bombay AICC subordinated the Provincial Congress Committees to the Ministries and placed a ban on satyagraha or any kind of extra-parliamentary movement.

Right Splitters at Work

The two policies that seek to guide the national destinies came into open conflict on the 9th July. The policy of struggle versus the policy of compromise. The Left joined its forces together, consolidated them into the Left Consolidation Committee and decided to sound the alarm. Left Unity which had scored important successes in the Bombay AICC session, now decided to make an open appeal to Congress masses to intervene and prevent the complete subordination of the Congress to constitutionalism. On the 9th of July, meetings were held all over the country. The voice of struggle, the voice of unity spoke in unambiguous terms.

What has been the reaction of the High Command to 9th July demonstrations? The High Command is indignant and angry. It has announced its decision to take disciplinary action against those who participated in the 9th July demonstration. Its policy is to purge the Congress of Left-elements. Its policy is first to split the Left-forces, undermine Left unity in order to stifle the voice of uncompromising struggle. By its disciplinary measures it seeks to tame the wavering elements, and isolate the rest. It has three different remedies for the three dominant Left groups. It knows the vacillations of the Congress Socialists. It therefore seeks to win them over. It seeks to discredit the Forward Bloc elements, by focussing attention on the mistakes of their leaders, of which there have been many. Witness for example the ferocity with which Subhas Babu's anti-prohibitionist statement—a statement which was not only harmful, but unworthy of any Left leader—was repeatedly attacked. It was an obvious attempt to make easy capital out of a false move. Finally the Right Wing wishes to crush the Communists with open force—witness the UP Circular against Communists, which, to say the least, is nothing short of a declaration of war against a section of the Nation.

The situation becomes still more critical with the vacillations in the Left-rank itself. If the 9th July demonstrations expressed a growing urge towards Left-unification, it also expressed the inherent weaknesses in Left-ranks which ought to be immediately removed. The threat of disciplinary action has created misgivings in the minds of certain Left elements. The same threat on the other hand is welcomed by one section as a triumph of the Left cause. These are alarming tendencies which spell ruin, not only for Left wing but for national struggle. They encourage the compromisers to apply pressure to split the Left. They arise out of a fundamental misconception about the role of Left unity.

The Responsibility of the Left

What does the Left represent today? For whom does it speak? The Left is no longer a critical opposition. It does not speak for this or that section. It seeks to give an alternative policy to the national movement. That policy is the policy of immediate and uncompromising struggle against British Imperialism. It is in an advantageous position, because the programme for immediate action is already to be found in the resolutions of the Annual Sessions of the Congress. From a critical opposition the Left has developed into a national force. It carries therefore the double responsibility for maintaining national unity, unity of the Congress and making the Congress an efficient instrument of struggle.

That responsibility today falls up on the shoulders of the Left, just because the Right follows a policy of compromise which leads to the disruption of national unity. Two policies, two lines, therefore, confront each other in the national arena. The chances of pushing the Nation towards struggle, depend entirely on the Left-forces. The lead for that cannot come from the Right. Only in the measure that the Left stands united and faces the offensive of the Right without allowing its ranks to be broken, will it succeed in strengthening the Congress and with it the national struggle. Left unity is the key to national unity. Those who abandon it under any pretext, as the opportunist Roy group has done, have no right to talk of struggle against drift. To be a party to abandon Left unity is to surrender before the disruptive offensive of the Right. The critical international situation, the planned betrayal of China, the growing repression in India and the utter failure of the Right wing leadership to meet the situation, its suicidal drive against the Left, teach only one lesson, either the united Left forces stand together and overcome the vacillations of the Right, or the Nation is dragged into the mire of compromise.

No Parallel Congress

The same situation also warns us against false interpretations of Left unity. Left unity is not a substitute for national unity but an instrument for it. No Left organization can be considered as a substitute for the National organization. To save the Congress from disruption is the foremost task of the Left. The expulsion of the Left elements, or disciplinary action against Lefts, has to be treated as serious breaches of national unity and cannot be welcomed as triumphs of the Left forces as Subhas Babu has done.

Unfortunately this perspective is often missed by some prominent Left-leaders. Subhas Babu himself is guilty of such lapses. In his enthusiasm for the Forward Bloc he often forgets that the Bloc is no substitute for the Congress. In one of the meetings in Bombay he talked of Forward Bloc and the National Congress as two distinct organizations, contrasted their policies and asked the people to join the Forward Bloc. This is nothing but a wild dream of a parallel organization—which will split national unity, the National Congress and discredit the Left forces. While Subhas is moderate and well-balanced in his criticism of the Right, some of his followers outbid the communalists in their abuse of the Congress leadership. On the 9th July, the President of the Forward Bloc meeting in Calcutta denounced the Congress regime as a Czarist regime and demanded that it be put to an end. Such drivelling nonsense, coming from one who presides over a Left meeting, is nothing short of provocative disruption.

Drawing exaggerated conclusions from the enthusiastic receptions accorded to him, Bose often thinks that the Forward Bloc alone can push ahead without the aid of other Left groups. Herein he simply misleads the Left and unconsciously plays the game of the Right. Let it be understood clearly that no Left group by itself is sufficiently powerful to overcome disruption and compromise. It may sound heroic to exaggerate one's strength, but it is nonetheless childish and disruptive.

Failings of the Forward Bloc

The followers of the Forward Bloc and Bose himself must understand that the problem of national unity is a serious problem. The problem of launching struggle through the Congress is in the end one of winning the masses for struggle. Petty intrigues inside the Congress and formal majorities do not create the necessary sanctions for a nation-wide struggle. The Forward Bloc is the weakest of all the Left groups so far as power to develop mass-sanctions is concerned. And it can not substitute this by opportunist alliances within the Congress, by forming an unprincipled anti-Right bloc.

A warning is necessary against such tendencies, because of late, they have become increasingly manifest. If they are allowed to go unchecked they will transform the Forward Bloc, behind which stands genuine discontent of a section of Left elements, into a factional bloc. The Forward Bloc is the product of genuine Left-discontent, and its politics must be free from opportunism. The danger of its going the wrong way is real just because the Bloc came into existence on the crest of an elemental discontent against Right disruption. Its discontent was not steeled by patient mass-work and patient struggle against disruption. Its outlook is not yet disciplined by a clear-cut ideology. In essence its politics is determined only by its reaction to the moves of the Right.

These shortcomings in the Left camp are no doubt serious. But they cannot be made an excuse for disrupting Left unity. They cannot be made an excuse for running away from Left consolidation. The question is whether in spite of mistakes and lapses, the forces behind the Forward Bloc are Left forces or not? Everyone will have to reply in the affirmative. And if that is so, if the dominating trend inside the Forward Bloc is Left, then it is impossible for a radical to leave the Left Consolidation on any ground whatsoever. Ideological excuses under such circumstances constitute a cloak to cover retreat before the Right offensive. But one thing is clear. The danger of the Forward Bloc being transformed into a rigid Left Nationalist Party, a rigid organization without a distinct ideology and without also experiences of mass-work behind it, increases ten-fold the responsibility of the proletarian forces—of the forces, who accept Marxism–Leninism. If there is any lesson to be drawn from contemporary events, it is this, that finally, only the proletarian forces—the forces of Socialists and Communists—can bring order into popular ranks and stave off and defeat the offensive of the ruling class, and put an end to disruptive tendencies. The ability of the Socialists and Communists to head and lead every discontent, shape and iron it, by practical action and patient criticism, is the final decisive factor in any people's struggle today. Reformism in Socialist ranks manifests itself in its cowardliness before disruption, in its refusal to face the complicated problems of national unity, in short, in its refusal to guide the diverse currents into the channel of all-embracing unity.

Proletarian Line of Unity

This special responsibility of the Socialist forces is often forgotten by a number of Socialist leaders. For Communists and Socialists the two conflicting lines now seen in the national arena arise from two different class origins. The line of compromise is the line of the Indian bourgeoisie; the line of consistent struggle and all-embracing unity is the line of the proletariat—the working class. The problem for Socialists and Communists is to shift the popular balance in favour of the proletarian line, in favour of immediate struggle.

The persistent struggle of Socialists for national unity, and offensive, releases one section after another from its old illusions. Left discontent continues to gather and spread under the impact of Socialist action and initiative. Divorced from Socialist ideology it runs in all directions. Once more the Socialists have to step in and guide it in the proper channels. Lack of Socialist initiative

leads to formation of Left groups and parties without a distinct ideology as has happened in the case of the Forward Bloc. The danger of national disruption increases.

The responsibility of the Marxian forces therefore increases ten-fold. Their role as generators of Left discontent by mere agitation is replaced by another and more important one—that of organizing and leading, so that it becomes a powerful lever of national unity.

Strengthen Left-Consolidation

The formation of Forward Bloc as a distinct Left group has placed this responsibility on the Socialists forces. The hesitation of the Socialists till now has already created misgivings about the Socialist movement. Socialist prestige has suffered and with it the only ideology that can serve as a correct guide to national action has gone down in the estimation of the Left-nationalists. This failure to act as the spear-head of the Left is fostering Left nationalist illusions about a parallel Congress and paving the way for national disruption under provocative attack from the Right.

Once more the same bitter lesson is being repeated in India. Socialist hesitation threatens to disrupt national unity. Lack of Socialist initiative and leadership endows crude Left-nationalism with a halo which it never deserves. On the top of this comes the division among Socialist forces, a division which is being deliberately fostered by those who have taken to expounding 'the new cult of Non-violent Socialism'. This unbearable situation can be ended in one way only. More than ever it has become necessary to throw overboard all hesitations, and vigorously pursue the efforts for Left unity and consolidate it. The patient work of the past few years, the great awakening among the masses created by Socialists, has to be properly harnessed for the purposes of impregnable unity and struggle. Socialist initiative and leadership through Left unity is the prime need of the hour. The Left Consolidation Committee must be made into a model defender of national unity and an ever-growing source of inspiration to all those who stand for struggle. The tendency to divert the growing discontent into factional channels can be defeated only if all Socialists stick to the Left Consolidation, notwithstanding the treachery of Roy, notwithstanding the lapses of Bose and the misapprehensions of Pt Nehru.

To be able to do this effectively, a united Socialist Party has become an urgent necessity. Unity can be delayed only at the expense of Socialist movement, at the expense of Left unity, at the expense of national struggle itself. Only a united Socialist party can act firmly and without hesitation. Only a united party will bring order in Left ranks and thereby check the compromising tendencies in the national movement. Only such a Party can once more become the spear-head of the Left forces and act as such. Relying on its basic strength among the Kisans and workers, the united party will be able to swerve the non-Socialist Lefts towards the masses and practically demonstrate to them how to fight the drift and at the same time develop national unity.

Socialist Unity, the Only Guarantee

Socialists who hesitate to achieve unity are unconsciously contributing to disruption. They are weakening the only force capable of stemming disruption—the force of Socialism, the force of the proletariat. The International developments have uttered the gravest warning to the Socialist movement in this country. The sell-out of China, the development over Danzig, cannot be matters of indifference to those who accept international socialism. The ruling classes are emboldened to plan these betrayals, because reformism in International Socialist ranks weakens popular resistance by failing to lead it. The same fate will overtake India if the Socialist movement fails at this critical juncture. Unity inside Socialist ranks to act as the spear-head of the unity of the Left through the Left Consolidation—this ought to be the immediate slogan of every Socialist. For, this alone will enable Socialists to bring about national unity and launch a nation-wide struggle. They alone will

save the nation from a disgraceful compromise and save Socialism from being utterly discredited. The alternative is collapse of Socialism leading to national disunity and the victory of Imperialism over the popular forces. Let not the bitter lesson taught in other countries be repeated in India. The Socialist forces must seize the initiative before it is finally lost. The National Offensive Week planned by the Left Consolidation Committee must see Socialists at the head, leading the Left and unifying its ranks. The Left challenge against war, for national-wide struggle, must thunder forth during the week. Imperialism must realize that it has to reckon with Socialism before it can hope to disrupt the popular front.

119. Socialism and Left Nationalism

Article by B.T. Ranadive, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 3, August 1939.

3 August 1939

The Socialist movement in this country went through its first test when it was confronted with the rise of Left-discontent, which finally crystallized itself into the Forward Bloc. The Socialists had acted as the spear-head of the Left so far. After the Tripuri Congress Left discontent has been growing by leaps and bounds and the base of the Left, so far led by the Socialists, began suddenly expanding. The Socialists were faced with the task of giving a clear-cut political lead to the whole Left, a lead that will be an effective resistance to Right disruption and yet preserve the unity of the Congress and carry the whole Congress forward towards struggle. This necessitated that the Socialists evolved a plan of joint action with the non-Socialist radicals. But the Socialists failed to speak with one voice. The result of this failure was that the Left nationalists formed their own organization, the Forward Bloc thus demarcating themselves from the Socialists on the one hand and isolating themselves from the mass of Congressmen on the other.

The rise of the Forward Bloc, created still further vacillation in Socialist ranks. Instead of giving a united lead to the non-Socialist Lefts, the Socialist movement experienced partial split and defections. Three trends appeared in the Socialist ranks. One advocated a line of having nothing to do with the Forward Bloc. Another stood for individual Socialists joining the Forward bloc. The third trend represented by the Communists, advocated co-operation with the Bloc, without Communists and Socialists individually joining it.

The second trend was dominant among a number of Socialists. Some even joined the Forward Bloc and Left the Congress Socialist Party. Others refrained from joining it, though not convinced about the wisdom of doing so.

This crisis in the Socialist movement, this indecisiveness at a critical juncture, forebodes ill for the future of the movement. It arose out of a fundamental failure on the part of certain Socialists to understand the basic role of the Socialist movement and its relation to the radical tendencies that may appear in the national struggle from time to time.

The rise of the Forward Bloc posed for the first time the question—what should be the attitude, the policy of the Socialist Party towards a Left-nationalist Party?

The question could only be decided on the basis of fundamentals, and further on the basis of a concrete understanding of what Left-nationalism stands for.

For the Socialists, the class-approach is fundamental. It is only because the Socialists can consistently apply this approach to the national struggle that they can aspire to give a lead to the entire nation. Further the Socialists are nothing if they are not the representatives of the working-class. Their struggle to give a lead, is in the end but a prolonged fight to establish the hegemony of the working class in the national movement. Unification of the radical forces is only a weapon for

Socialists to unite the entire people for a common and decisive struggle against British Imperialism. Left Unity can never be an end in itself; but a means to achieve the greater end—the unification of the people.

Where does Left-nationalism stand today? No doubt it stands for ending the policy of drift, for greater co-ordination of struggle, for closer relations between class-organizations and the Congress. It would seem that Left-nationalism stands today with the Socialists on every vital question of the day. That is no doubt true so far as the overwhelming majority of non-Socialist radicals is concerned. But as Socialists, we can never forget that this attitude on practical questions is the result of the initiative of the Socialists, Communists and the Kisan Sabhaites. Long before Left-nationalism found its programme, that programme was put to practical test, and popularized by the Socialists themselves. The Socialists and Communists were not content with the slogan of 'closer relations.' They built Kisan Sabhas, they built Trade Unions, organized protest-strikes and Kisan Satyagrahas, and practically demonstrated that mass allegiance could be won for a more thorough-going programme of struggle and advance. They could do so only because of their class approach, only because this approach was applied at least partially to the various problems that face the national movement. Without Socialist initiative, without this practical leadership, and without the persistent struggle of the Socialists, against the policy of drift, Left nationalism would not have found the present radical programme that it has got.

The situation as confronts us today is, as follows: Left-nationalism stands today as a programme popularized by the Socialist movement; yet because of the failure of the Socialists to take organizational lead, it confronts the Socialist movement as an independent force.

Taking its stand on the immediate programme popularized by the Socialists, Left-nationalism distinguishes itself by its total failure to understand the class-approach behind the programme, and therefore its inability to consistently carry forward the programme. The Socialists see in the drift of the Right Wing, the vacillations of a class—the Indian bourgeoisie. The Left-nationalists see in it the conspiracy of individuals—the High Command. The first approach leads to a patient struggle against the vacillations, hard practical work to isolate the compromising tendency combined with a merciless exposure—all to be achieved in a manner which will maintain the growing unity of the Congress as against the disruption brought about by the policy of the Right Wing. The second approach seeks short-cuts, concentrates only on the failings of the leadership, does not exert to win over the masses yet under the Right-wing leadership. It really seeks to achieve the impossible. It seeks to do away with the political influence of the class without taking any effective steps to remove or lessen it. Divorced from the class approach of the Socialists, Left-nationalism, if allowed to have its own course, will disgrace itself as a factional combination allying itself with opportunist elements and disgracing the radical movement as a whole. On the fundamental question of national unity, threatened by Right disruption the leader of the Left-nationalism, Subhas Bose, miserably fails when he lightly talks about 'Civil War', 'parting of ways' and quotes the old splits to demonstrate that even splits lead to a strengthening of the Congress. Here Left-nationalism merely plays the game of Right disruption, and Socialists can have nothing to do with it.

But this alarming tendency does not stop here. Dreams of alternative Congress are seriously entertained by a section of Left-nationalist leaders. Bose speaking at a meeting in Bombay contrasted the policy of the Forward Bloc with the policy of the Congress—posed the Bloc against the Congress and demonstrated how wild were the dreams entertained by a section of the Left-leaders.

Besides, a number of opportunist alliances are already in evidence. In Nagpur on the 9th July Dr Khare appeared to speak on behalf of the Forward Bloc on the protest, but the Socialists prevented him from addressing the meeting. In Bombay Bose made a guarded anti-prohibitionist

statement, seeking sympathy from the most-dubious quarters. A number of anti-Kisan Sabhaites, confirmed opponents of Mazdoors and Kisans, find a ready access to the Forward Bloc.

These are dangerous tendencies, and if allowed to go unchecked they would spell ruin and disaster not only for the Left, but for the country as a whole. There are thus two distinct tendencies in the Forward Bloc. One a genuine Left tendency which seeks to go forward, takes its stand on the programme of struggle popularized by the Socialists and yet unable to apply the main principles of that programme towards the problem of all-embracing national unity. It is unable to make this turn just because it lacks the class-approach of the Socialists, of the working-class. It is at present in an anti-Rightist mood, because the events since the presidential election centred round certain persons. Its disillusionment with the Right did not come directly over political issues, but issues which appeared to be personal. It is just because it lacks this class perspective, that this genuinely radical tendency stands in danger of being exploited by persons to whom any stick is good enough to beat the Right Wing with. The danger of Left-nationalism, degenerating into factionalism is, therefore, real and immediate. Instead of being a force to develop broader Unity, a force to isolate the compromisers and thus prevent disunity of the people, Left nationalism may develop into a factional counterpart of Right disruption.

The Socialists, therefore, owe a definite responsibility towards the Forward Bloc. The basic Left discontent behind the formation of the Bloc is to be developed and disciplined. They must understand that the programme of the Bloc is borrowed from their own activities; and that in this respect it marks a tremendous step forward in the development of Left nationalism. They must also understand that to leave the Left-elements to their own fate is to reject the task of Socialist leadership, is to reject the struggle for the hegemony of the working class. Those who originally advocated that Socialists should not enter into an alliance with the Forward Bloc, were definitely wrong; they practically gave up their role of acting as the spear-head of the Left forces. They also forget, that without Socialist alliance and leadership, Left-nationalism would come to grief, and thus bring disruption to the entire Left, that it would become a weapon in the hands of factionalists, and thereby make the struggle against drift more difficult. Welcoming therefore the programme of the Forward Bloc as an advance, the Socialists cannot ignore the shortcomings of the Bloc and its followers. In the first place they cannot ignore the fact that independent Socialist practice alone could keep the Left elements on the proper path. The more the Socialists showed in actual practice how a mass-basis could be secured for a policy of advance, how in the end through the partial struggles and class-organizations a base could be created for a nation-wide struggle, how concretely the Right Wing drift could be fought, the more they did this, the greater would be the mobilization of non-Socialist radicals for a patient struggle against compromise, and the lesser will be the influence of the factional and opportunist elements on them. This meant also freedom of patient and even sharp criticism of Left-nationalists whenever they chose the wrong path and freedom to follow one's own path and demonstrate the demarcating line between Left-nationalism and Socialism. Without such a demarcation, without such criticism, Left-nationalism cannot be made to keep up to its radical politics. Those who advocated that individual Socialists should join the Forward Bloc, only behaved as ordinary radicals. They forgot the necessities of Socialist leadership based on a correct class-approach. Enchanted by the programme of the Forward Bloc, indignant at the disgusting tactics of the Right Wing, they failed to understand that the progressive programme of the Forward Bloc was the direct result of their own initiative and leadership. They further failed to understand that the programme cannot be consistently carried out except on the basis of Socialist ideology. For them Socialism as an independent ideology and party has now practically finished its mission, just because the Left-nationalists took up the radical slogans. To some the Forward Bloc became an alternative to the Socialist Party—a Left organization without a distinct ideology,

a party embodying an elemental Left-revolt became an alternative to Socialism. Those who seek to join the Forward Bloc, do not know that they are demanding a step backward from Socialism to Left-nationalism, from the working class to the petty-bourgeoisie.

If allowed to pursue their own course, they will not only disgrace Socialism but ruin Left-nationalism also. The only guarantee of Left-nationalism continuing its radical politics is the Socialist leadership and Socialist initiative. Individually joining the Forward Bloc would remove this guarantee and pave the way for the utter ruin of the radicals. Moreover these comrades totally forget that the task of Socialists does not end with the formation of a Left bloc organization of radicals. Socialists have still to speak to the people as Socialists, the task of building peoples unity is still to be achieved. Identification with the Forward Bloc would simply mean that Socialists will be unable to come forward as Socialists; they will not be able to distinguish themselves from the non-Socialist Lefts, even when it is necessary to do so. To identify one-self completely with the Forward Bloc, by individually joining it, is to give up the basic role of Socialism, show a complete lack of confidence in the Socialist ideology and overestimate the radicalism of Left-nationalists.

It is extremely regrettable that quite a number of comrades do not understand this. The only correct policy under the present circumstances is that disclosed by the third trend co-operation, alliance, but no individual joining—a bloc of Left elements, through the Left Consolidation Committee. This gives the Socialists and Communists opportunity to influence the decision of Left-nationalism without identification with it, and at the same time gives the freedom to differentiate from the Left-nationalists when they fail to keep to their radical professions—an opportunity to give a lead to the Left discontent and at the same time opportunity to criticize their mistakes before the public.

The future of the Forward Bloc depends on the decisiveness with which the Socialists and Communists choose to lead it. The rise of the Forward Bloc as an independent organization is due to the failure of the CSP to take organizational lead in the matter. Yet the programme of the Forward Bloc discloses how deeply Left nationalism is influenced by the Socialist movement. To strengthen this influence by patient criticism and independent Socialist practice is the common task before all Socialists. They have to defeat the attempts of those, who seek to direct this genuine discontent into factional channels. They have further to defeat the provocative attempts of the Right to denounce this discontent as merely factional and opportunist and isolate it. Knowing its limitations, they must refuse to join the Forward Bloc and at the same time march at the head of radical forces. At the same time they must avoid the fatal blunder of cutting themselves away from the Left discontent. Armed with the Socialist consciousness, devoted to the arduous task of safeguarding national unity from Right disruption and Left mistakes, they have to come out every time with their Socialist solution and approach. This alone will save the Socialist movement and with it the growing orientation of the Left sections towards a genuinely radical programme.

120. Good News

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 4 August 1939.

4 August 1939

In response to an appeal from Sj. Subhas Chandra Bose and Sj. Sarat Chandra Bose the political prisoners of the Dum-Dum and Alipore Jails have abandoned their hunger-strike. We welcomed this good news last night and we hope it will give intense relief to Bengal and the whole of political India. We took a very alarming view of the situation when Dr Rajendra Prasad and Sj. Mahadev Desai left Calcutta with anxiety in their minds at not having been able to persuade the hunger-strikers to break their fast.¹ There was virtually a deadlock, as Rajendra Babu said, both the political

prisoners and the Bengal Government remaining adamant in their resolve. In a word, the prospect seemed extremely gloomy and the anxiety of our countrymen reached its peak. But despite all this, negotiations between S. Subhas Bose and S. Sarat Bose on the one hand and Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin, Home Minister, on the other, had been continuing. We learnt yesterday that as a result of such negotiations certain concrete proposals regarding the question of release of these prisoners were agreed upon and that with these proposals the Bose brothers were going to meet the prisoners. Accordingly, in the afternoon, the Bose brothers, accompanied by three Labour leaders, visited the prisoners in the jails and appealed to them to give up the hunger-strike in view of the understanding arrived at between them and the Home Minister. At the time of writing we do not know what the understanding is, nor are we aware of the nature of the proposals referred to above. We, however, think that these proposals must be such as could be acceptable to S. Subhas Bose and S. Sarat Bose. The whole country will heave a sigh of relief that the efforts of the Bose brothers have averted a catastrophe the nature of which we shudder to imagine. The terrible anxiety that was aroused over this grave issue has now been set at rest.

For full four weeks the political prisoners have shown an amount of courage, steadfastness and determination the parallel of which it will be difficult to find. They resorted to hunger-strike not out of fun but of a sense of extreme desperation. Some of them had to be transferred to hospital, and those who remained in the gaols were fast losing strength. Grave would have been the nature of the tragedy if the hunger strike had been prolonged for sometime more. Their grievances were just and they had the sympathy of all.

The whole of India wanted the prisoners to give up the hunger-strike and they have bravely responded to the country's united and fervent appeal. Be it noted, the political prisoners have only suspended their hunger-strike for two months during which period they will watch the efforts that will be made for their release. While they have done their duty, the country has also a supreme duty to discharge by them. Let not suspension of hunger-strike lead to a relaxation of efforts on our part. And let it not be forgotten that it is the duty of the country to see every one of these prisoners freed in course of the period the strike will be in abeyance.

¹ Armed with Mahatma Gandhi's authority, Rajendra Prasad and Mahadev Desai tried to convince these hunger-strikers that their method of seeking release was wrong and that even if they gave up the hunger-strike there would be no lack of effort on the part of Congress leaders to effect their release by every legitimate means at the disposal of the Congress. They were even told that the hunger-strike was acting as a handicap to those who were working for their release. But all these arguments failed to carry conviction. The hunger-strikers seemed to be of opinion that Mahatmaji had done all that was possible for him to do to convince the Bengal Government that the release of the political prisoners was not only just and desirable, but that it would not in any way affect the cause of peace in which he was interested quite as much as the Government of Bengal. But Mahatmaji's efforts had failed in the past and might equally fail in the future. Unless therefore they received an assurance that they would be released in the near future, they could not retrace a step which they had taken, not in a moment of excitement, but after mature deliberation.

121. Tamilnad Congress Socialist Party and Forward Bloc

Hindu, 5 August 1939.

5 August 1939

The Tamilnad Congress Socialist Party Executive Committee met at Dindigul on July 28, with A.B. Srinivasa Rao in the chair. Resolutions including one defining the attitude of the party towards the Forward Bloc were passed.

The Committee welcomed the formation of the Forward Bloc as a platform for uniting the non-Socialist Left Nationalists in the Congress. The resolution stated that both in its character and

constitution, the Bloc was only a platform for Left-nationalists and hence Socialists had no place in it. At the same time, in view of the growing drive against the Left and the policy of drift adopted by the present leadership, it held that it was essential to establish Left unity in the Congress. The Executive Committee, therefore, welcomed the formation of the Left Consolidation Committee. The Committee deplored the attitude so far adopted by the Madras Congress Ministry by promulgating Section 144 and arresting and imprisoning nearly 300 men and Women workers in the labour strikes, and urged the Government to effectively intervene in the disputes. It looked with grave concern on the serious crisis developing in the textile industry, particularly at Coimbatore, as a result of which the wages of 30,000 workers were threatened to be reduced by one-half and stated in view of the fact that such crisis had already developed in Bombay, Kanpur and other textile centres, it had become an All-India issue involving four lakhs of workers. The Executive Committee, therefore, urged the Congress to treat this as an issue of fundamental importance and secure adequate protection to the Indian textile industry by raising the import duty on all yarn and textile goods and by reducing the import duty on cotton.

The Executive Committee disapproved of the resolution on satyagraha and the relationship between the Congress Ministries and the Provincial Congress Committees passed at the Bombay session of the AICC. The Committee expressed the opinion that the resolution of the Working Committee of Tamilnad Congress Committee, asking Congress Committees not to welcome or participate in the meetings organized for welcoming Subhas Bose was *ultra vires*.

122. Philosophical Background of Forward Bloc

Article by Bose, *Tribune*, 6 August 1939.

6 August 1939

‘The tune has come for the Left Wing to differentiate itself from the Right and proceed to consolidate itself. When this is done the Left will secure a majority within the Congress and then proceed to resume the struggle for independence in the name of Indian National Congress. This is the task of the Left Wing today. To fulfil this task the Forward Bloc has come into existence.’

Bose says that the growth and development of the Congress has taken place as the result of an inner urge, though it has been stimulated by external factors. It is this inner urge which is primarily responsible for the birth of the Forward Bloc. Neither personal factors nor accidental circumstances can account for this new phenomenon in Indian politics. The Forward Bloc has appeared because the Congress must enter on a new phase in its evolutionary process.

In every movement, Bose adds, that is living or dynamic, there is a latent Left—a latent ‘antithesis’. This latent Left Wing becomes manifest in the fullness of time and through it further growth and development takes place. Through co-operation with the Right or rough conflict with it, the Left must continue to grow till it succeeds in capturing the organization or in winning the Right over to its side. When this is achieved and the possibilities of the Left Wing must emerge and ultimately oust the Left Wingers of yesterday.

Bose continues: ‘Between 1936 and 1938 the Left Wing of the Congress has grown and developed as a result of cooperation with the Right. In September 1938 the cry was first raised on behalf of the Right that co-operation with the Left was no longer possible and that the Left was becoming too noisy and troublesome to collaborate with. This ultimately reached its climax in 1939, when the Right Wing deliberately decided to end co-operation with the Left.’

‘The Right Wing having refused co-operation with the Left,’ declares Bose, ‘we Leftists would be justified in surrendering to them in the plea of unity, only if the Right Wing still had a dynamic role to play. But it is unfortunately clear from the correspondence I had with Mahatma Gandhi in March and April last that he no longer thinks in terms of a coming struggle. The Ministers and their guides now dominate, and the Congress do not contemplate a struggle either. To surrender to the Right under such circumstances and preserve the external facade of unity would in reality amount to perpetuating stagnation and reaction within the Congress. We cannot do so. We should not do so’.

123. Preparing Country for Coming Struggle: Objective of ‘Forward Bloc’, Subhas Chandra Bose’s Interview on ‘Forward Bloc’

Tribune, 11 August 1939.

11 August 1939

‘It is altogether wrong to say that the Forward Bloc supports the Gandhian policy and programme. Being an integral part of the Congress, the Forward Bloc has to abide by the policy and programme of the Congress,’ said Subhas Chandra Bose, replying to certain questions put to him by the United Press representative.

Q. Don’t you think that the Congress would be divided into rigid blocs if a Left bloc is established in the Congress?

A. The Forward Bloc or the Left Consolidation Committee has come into existence long after the consolidation of the Rightist elements in the Congress under the aegis of the Gandhi Seva Sangh. When the Right has been already formed and consolidated, it is our duty to consolidate ourselves. If we do not do so, we shall weaken the Congress still further. When Left consolidation takes place we shall be able to influence the Congress and convert the majority in the Congress to our point of view. We shall then achieve real and effective unity within the Congress. Left consolidation is stepping stone towards national unity. Leftists were working in harmony with the Rightists as long as the latter were prepared for co-operation. But when the Rightists declared that joint action was no longer possible, then the Leftists had to resolve to organize themselves, otherwise they would have completely extinguished themselves.

Q. Don’t you think that it has been possible for you to influence Congressmen more in your capacity of Rashtrapati and also as a prominent Congress leader?

A. As long as there was hope of co-operation between the two wings of the Congress I could further the common cause by functioning as President. But when the Right Wing resolved to non-co-operate with the Left and demanded a homogeneous Cabinet, I could not usefully continue as President. If I had continued as President, I would have been forced to function as an agent of the Right Wing.

Q. If the Leftists are conscious that the country is prepared for struggle why do they not start satyagraha on their own responsibility?

Three-fold Task

A. The Leftists have a three-fold task before them. Firstly Left consolidation; secondly, converting the Congress to their point of view and achieving real unity and thirdly resumption of the national struggle with the united strength of the Congress. Leftists hope and believe that the Congress will,

in the near future, adopt their policy and programme. Consequently they should resume the national struggle after they have won the Congress over to their Policy and programme.

Q. It is said that the Forward Bloc is only an organization to oppose the present Congress leadership, and also contended that it is not a Leftist Party as it supports Gandhian policy and programme. Some people feel that the Forward Bloc had not put forward any concrete programme of which before the country. What is the immediate programme which the Forward Bloc wants to concentrate upon?

A. The Forward Bloc is not opposed to any individual or group in the Congress for the sake of opposition. The Bloc has a clear cut programme and endeavours to work it to the best of its ability. If any difficulties or obstacles appear in its path they will have to be combated out of sheer necessity. But if the present leadership accept the Bloc's programme and take steps to resume the national struggle the members of the Bloc will be only too glad to work under them and to follow their lead.

Whether the Forward Bloc is a Leftist institution or not will be clear from the programme of the Bloc. It is altogether wrong to say that it supports the Gandhian policy and programme. Being an integral part of the Congress the Forward Bloc has to abide by the policy and programme of the Congress. It wants to persuade the Congress to accept a more radical programme.

I am sorry that it is still said that the Bloc has no definite programme. The constitution and programme were adopted at the All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc held in Bombay on the 22 and 23 June. They have since been published in the press and also in book form. An examination of the programme will show that the Forward Bloc stands for a new and supplementary programme of a radical nature. At the same time the Bloc wants to work with a revolutionary mentality the present Congress programme in so far as it is of a beneficial character. All the items in the programme of the Bloc have as their objective—'preparing the country for the coming struggle.'

Q. Why did you not join the Congress Socialist Party and found the necessity of forming the Forward Bloc? There is a certain section who believe that it would have been possible for you to correct the leadership if it is wanting in any respect, by your dynamic personality and bold exposition of policy and programme, thus paving the way for radicalizing the Congress.

A. My attitude towards the Congress Socialist Party was first defined in my book *The Indian Struggle*. It was defined later in my presidential address at the Haripura Congress held last year. I have always been friendly to the CSP.

At the Haripura Congress I stated in my address that the role of the CSP in the Congress should be a Left Wing role. The CSP in my view have taken the lead in rallying all the Left elements in the Congress on the basis of a common minimum programme. This should have been done by the CSP on its own initiative. After the Haripura Congress when the idea of a Left Bloc was mooted, another opportunity presented itself to the CSP. For a time it looked as if the CSP leaders would take a leading part in building up the Left Bloc but later on they changed their mind. Thus the Left Bloc came into existence without the help of the CSP. In the meantime, the Tripuri Congress had been held and you know very well what role the CSP had played there. If the CSP had worked along right lines, it would have found numerous recruits by now. But how can you expect people to join when they do not agree with the policy and tactics of the CSP? This remark applies to myself as well, though in 1937 after my release from internment I was prepared to join the CSP.



124. Communists' Call to Congressmen: Ban on Bose Must Go

National Front, Vol. 2, No. 22, 20 August 1939.

12 August 1939

The Working Committee by hitting out mercilessly and ruthlessly at Sjt Subhas Chandra Bose has delivered a serious blow to the unity of our people.

It is not the victimization of an individual Congress leader but a bureaucratic attack against a whole section of the National Congress, a section representing revolutionary and virile forces of our Nation.

The National leadership is grievously mistaken if it thinks it has strengthened the Congress by this decision, by this effort to crush 'indiscipline and revolt against the Congress'.

On the other hand, by taking this step at a critical moment, when the world is on the brink of war and when our nation itself will have to come to grips in a final conflict with Imperialism, the Working Committee has only encouraged the disruptive forces within and without the Congress, who pin their faith on sabotage of struggle and on compromise with Imperialism on the issues of Federation and War.

The Working Committee has taken a mechanically formal and disciplinarian view of the whole question and in doing so it has missed the political kernel of the matter.

The Crux of the Matter

True, the resolutions in question were passed by a majority at the AICC session. But is it not also true that they met with a determined and united opposition from a considerable minority of the house? And why? Because these resolutions did not stand by themselves. They represented a link in a whole line of policy which was meeting with a growing opposition in the Congress and the country.

That line is the one which is being persistently popularized during the last 3 years by Gandhiji in his *Harijan*. It is the line of a division of labour between the ministers and the masses. The ministries were to perform the alchemistic experiment of transforming the dross of the British Constitution into the gold of Indian freedom, and the masses of Congressmen were to restrict themselves to the constructive programme and to create a non-violent atmosphere suitable to the success of the experiment.

It was a line of curbing the fighting power of the working class and peasant masses, of refusing to unify those forces with the Congress, of refusing to weld the Congress into a weapon of United Front struggle as the Congress presidential addresses of 1936 and 1937 visualized.

It was a line which repudiated the unity of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggle as the Congress Election Manifesto visualized it, and refused to prepare the nation for a country-wide offensive by unifying the fight of the people in the States and in the British Provinces against Federation and War and for the calling of a victorious Constituent Assembly of free India.

Conflict of Policies

The conflict in the AICC on those resolutions was in reality a conflict between two distinct political lines, between the line of constitutionalism, of avoiding struggle, of seeking for a compromise on the strength of sheer constitutional pressure and the line of revolutionary unity of all forces of struggle, especially those of the organized workers and peasants under the banner of the Congress and of launching a decisive all-round fight at this critical juncture.

It is well known that since Sjt Subhas Chandra Bose stood as a candidate for the presidential election in the beginning of this year against the wishes of the national leadership, he has associated

himself with the alternative political line of all-round unity and all-round struggle. He took a decisive stand against constitutionalism and allied himself with the forces of workers' and peasants' struggles, with Socialists and Communists, and stood for uniting these forces with those of Left Nationalism in an endeavour to achieve the broader unity of the people under the Congress for a decisive fight.

The blow against Bose, therefore, can only be interpreted as the determination of the Working Committee to completely suppress the considerable minority in the Congress which represents new forces of mass organization and struggle.

Gandhiji himself recognized that the bulk of Congressmen were losing faith in his constructive programme. Gandhiji knows well that the bulk of Congressmen disagree with his dictum that an all round struggle should not be launched for fear of violence. Recently he suggested in *Harijan* that this central issue be thrashed out in a special session of the AICC.

Gandhiji admits that the choice between the conflicting lines which are being posed before the Nation must be made by the AICC. We say it must be made by the entire membership of the Congress. Let the issues be formulated, let them be discussed by the conferences of primary members, by primary committees and district committees. Let the coming delegates' elections be fought round this issue and then let the full session of the Congress take the decision on it.

A Bureaucratic Bludgeon

A mighty democratic organization like the Congress could not function in any other way. But our Working Committee thinks otherwise. It wants to suppress the minority view by using the bludgeon of disciplinary action. It has given the broad hint to the Central Executives to follow its lead and barred the minority leaders who participated in the 9th July meetings from being delegates for the Congress for 3 years. What we are faced with is not a democratic decision over the vital political issue of the conflict which is raging within the Congress but a bureaucratic steam-rolling of the minority view. They got a 'homogeneous' Working Committee at Calcutta, now their heart is set on getting a completely homogeneous Congress at the coming annual session.

It is Imperialism, our enemy, who will be pleased with this decision. The Working Committee has taken other important decisions. We are going to resist imperialist war preparations. Our Ministries have been ordered to resign instead of carrying out war measures shows our displeasure at the preparations to impose Federation by refusing to allow our members to attend the present extended central legislature.

But side by side with this fighting gesture you have launched an attack, a coercive measure against a part of the Congress. You have shown your willingness to suppress those forces of struggle with which you swore united front in 1936-37.

An Invitation to Compromise

We have bared our teeth towards the enemy, but at the same time weakened the arm of unity with which to smite him. Will not the enemy laugh? 'Congress will not bite perhaps it will beg'—will not the enemy draw this insulting inference?

By accompanying a fighting gesture against Imperialism by a vicious attack against the Left, the Working Committee appears as if it is tendering its bona fides to the enemy. 'We are determined to resist War and Federation, but we can equally firmly hold in check forces of revolutionary struggle.' This is an invitation to compromise. What it will lead to is further aggression by imperialism and disruption of our own forces.

Reverse the Disruptive Decision

These are serious implications of the action against Sjt Bose. But the Leftists, Socialists and Communists will not be provoked. They are not going to play the game of the splitters. It is their task to achieve unity of the people and of the Congress for a decisive struggle. We are confident of our growing power and influence. It is based on the growing political consciousness of the masses—born in the innumerable working class and peasant struggles which are taking place throughout India including the States.

We call upon all Left Congressmen, Socialists, and Communists, to redouble their efforts in enrolling Congress members, in conducting a mass campaign among the primary members of the Congress for uniting the entire Congress behind the policy of launching a nation-wide struggle against Federation and War, as indicated in the Tripuri resolution on National Demands.

The primary Congress members must assert themselves. They must send such delegates to the next Congress as will reverse this disruptive decision and achieve unity of the Congress, of the leadership and of the people for a final decisive fight.

125. M.N. Roy to Humayun Kabir, 17 August 1939

M.N. Roy Papers, File No. H-14, Microfilm Roll No. i, NMML.

It is surprising that you did not receive any invitation to the projected meeting of radical Muslims. However no great harm has been done since you are of the opinion that it would not be advisable for you to attend such a conference. I believe your views in this connection are right. The plan, as far as I am concerned with it, is to organize a Radical Group inside the Muslim League. Hasrat Mohani is rather confused in his ideas. He wants to have some sort of an all-embracing conference and is playing with the idea of forming a third party. I have not, of course, encouraged the idea, but in order to secure his support for my plan, it is necessary to humour him a little. Although I fully agree with you that some Muslims should stay outside the League, yet, there must be some way for their remaining in contact with the radical nationalist elements in that organization, which for the moment, unfortunately, happens to sway the majority of the community. That purpose will be served if the Radicals among Congress Muslims formally joined our League, which enjoys the confidence of the better elements of the Muslim community. Therefore, I was so very anxious to have you and your friends formally join the Radical League. Unfortunately, for practical considerations, you could not do that. Consequently, I am wondering how you could be fitted into the scheme of creating a platform for co-operation between the Radical elements in the Congress and the Muslim League. Our plan is not only to organize a Radical Group inside the Muslim League but to create some machinery for co-operation and joint action of the radical elements in both the organizations.

As regards your wishes about the relation between Subhas Babu and myself, I also regret that co-operation has not been possible. I have tried my best. But there was no response. Subhas Babu does not want it. Besides, I believe recently he has been acting in a way which will be harmful for all concerned. Therefore, I had to disassociate myself publicly. He has taken that ill, and is today, instigating a vile propaganda against me.



126. Amrendra Nath to Roy

M.N. Roy Papers, File No. C-16, NMML.

Calcutta
19 August 1939

My dear Naren,

I owe you an apology for the delay in replying to your two letters. I did not hurry to reply because I was awaiting further developments. Really speaking when I read in the *Patrika* that you abandoned Subhas and also wired Pandit Nehru to induce his party to do the same lest you should be sacked out of the Congress for associating with Subhas who had raised the standard of revolt against the Working Committees Resolutions, I had felt a rude shock. I was upset. My plan for bringing you two together for giving a new lead and light to Indian politics through Bengal again was practically frustrated. I do not deny that Subhas might have awaited for some time further yet and perhaps he had committed a blunder by giving an easy handle to his unrelenting opponents to suppress his political career but I cannot but confess that by this hasty step he has given new life to the monotonous and humdrum political condition of India. He has sacrificed himself for the good of future politicals of India.

Before you left Calcutta you had a four hours' talk with Subhas and had come to a certain understanding by which both joined the Leftist Consolidation Bloc to work which Subhas formed (the Forward Bloc) as a party with equal status with other parties to work out a common formula. I was happy at your *entente* and expected a very strong and forceful movement to take its birth in Bengal again. But your sudden step shattered my expectations. But as a born and unshakeable optimist I still hope that things would take better turn in time.

Subhas and you two together will make a very strong combination and as patriots with no other axes to grind each would have been supplementary and complementary to other.

The struggle for leadership has no meaning with us. As soon as late Surendra Nath was ousted from his unrivalled political position, automatically rose up four mentionable personalities viz., Aurobindo, Tilak, Lajpat and Bipin Pal and nobody questioned which one was the real leader. There was no strife between them about leadership. The present Working Committee stands in the very same position as late Surendra Nath and deserve censure. But you have not yet created that strength to pass a vote of no-confidence on them as they command majority. But everyone of the members has right to revolt and those who really believe in future mass revolution can transform themselves into a compact body taking one as their central figure, making a circle with all the group leaders as members of the Presidium. They can in a conference find out a common formula for carrying out the work keeping true to their ideology at the same time. I, for myself do not place much value to the ideologies which are creating so much difference in the body politics. My whole ideology lies confined in one and only one idea and 'that India must be free anyhow and at any cost'. For this purpose the mass mind must be developed and educated by different process. The present intelligentsia has become almost incapable. Here and there might be one or more patriotic young men, who would stake their or his all, but in majority they are more for a comfortable home under the British Government. So revolutionary mentality has to be created by capturing the Primary Congress Committees.

Subhas may remain out of Congress but no one will lose faith in his patriotism and urge for revolution and if leftists cultivate the sense of oneness he, will be back to the fold of Congress as a full-fledged leftist. Give him full and hearty cooperation and the left consolidation will be not only an organized body but will be a strong body within the Congress.

Sentiment in Bengal is running very high and Subhas has become not only the hero of the new drama but the martyr as well. His opponents are a discredited group and without the patronage of Wardha cannot move an inch. No one of them can face the public and stand the challenges of the provincial workers. People who are outside the pale of politics are all for Subhas and no one can deny him. He is idolized everywhere.

The feeling in India is not less keen and strong. Today it seems to me that all leftist leaders should join hands with Subhas as the central figure without losing individual ideology. They must find out a common formula. If they cannot take advantage of the present situation they will not be able to cope with the growing strength of the rightists. A really revolutionary outlook is to be established and only real leftists will be able to do it. You may say that Subhas is not a genuine revolutionist, which I do not accept. All leftists have found fault with Gandhism but no one had raised the real standard of revolt.

Subhas may have many drawbacks yet as a leader: but he yields to none in his political outlook of a revolutionist. The little reverence he manifests in his utterances regarding Gandhiji is a remnant of his past familiarity with him. I wish you to stand by him at this critical time.

Bengal had revolted at Surat and the extremists had captured the Congress: Bengal had revolted at Gaya and the Swaraj party came to give a new lead. Bengal has revolted again at Tripuri and she will give a new lead and light to future politics of India. For this purpose I invite you to join Subhas in Bengal. You are not a subjective man but an objective spirit, and so I expect you to forget the drawbacks in Subhas and make those up by your political equipments viz., wisdom and experience.

Bengal has many pseudo friends in politics. Let not sons and daughters of Bengal abandon a worthy son of Bengal when he stands in need of their full sympathy and support.

Regarding the Forward Bloc I wish Subhas had left it as the common platform for all leftists. But he has made it a party like the Swaraj party as equal partners with other such parties viz., Socialists and Communists etc. I am afraid that he has committed a blunder as to err is human, we may forget it and try to guide him rightly on his path of revolution. Leftists have not made up their minds yet, rightists are prone to do the mischief of confusing them further by plan and policy of corrupt people. So far as rightists are concerned I am afraid it will be wrong on my part not to tell the public that invariably they are corrupters in every sphere of their activity.

They are friends of the capitalists and enemies of the poverty-stricken masses. In the Congress they are corrupters of the workers. They make them subservient to their wicked activities. Good men have become untruthful and hypocritic. This is because they have tasted power and pleasures of position and this has swollen their heads. They must be ousted or else none will be able to capture the Congress. To accomplish this, all leftist leaders should sink their differences and unite. Forget one another's defects and try to make a common cause, to create a real revolutionary outlook in the masses. If the Congress goes on chewing the cud to digest the power and position it has in its possession, let it do it at its own risk of annihilation. But fortunately it will not perish as the spirit is immortal and eternal.

Re. my tour I shall be free from office during October, November and December 1939 and during these days I shall be touring for Insurance and other business. In case you come down to Calcutta you will be able to know better. I am losing confidence in myself as I am not getting any satisfaction in the party factions and unnecessary bickering. Those who are partisans are yet vigorous political workers.

Makhan and Suresh have parted, not for opinion but for private affairs. But this is another episode of our Bengal politics.

I have drafted a long letter to you which may or may not afford you pleasure, but as I am free from any bias I have frankly given you what I have thought about the situation on the surface.

127. M.N. Roy on the Expulsion of Bose

Independent India, 20 August 1939.*Dehradun*
20 August 1939

The Working Committee Resolution to take disciplinary action against Sjt Subhas Chandra Bose is not altogether unexpected. But its severity will shock not only the general public, but a great majority of Congressmen. The term 'great majority' is purposely used, because it is yet too early to forget that only six months ago he was elected President of the Congress in the teeth of the opposition of all the most authoritative leaders. That might not have been a vote for Subhas Babu personally, nor a vote of no-confidence against the leaders who opposed his candidature. But that was certainly a demonstration of dissatisfaction against the present leadership and the prevalent state of affairs inside the Congress. Nothing has happened in the meantime to remove that dissatisfaction. It has only been driven under-ground by manoeuvres of those in power which became successful because of the absence of any determined alternative leadership. Therefore, the latest act of the Working Committee for putting down a 'rebel' is not likely to be very popular. By its frantic efforts to retain its monopolistic hold on the Congress machinery, the present leadership is weakening its position morally. Incidentally, such acts may prove very harmful for the Congress itself.

The resolution is deplorable because it is not really necessary. A condemnation of the 9th of July demonstration defying the presidential ban and a warning against the repetition of such behaviour would have served the purpose of maintaining discipline and discouraging fissiparous tendencies. I am afraid that the resolution may defeat its purpose. Instead of protecting the unity of the Congress, it may drive a major provincial organization into open revolt against the central authority. That would be most unfortunate. The possibility of such dangerous developments should have weighed with the Working Committee.

It is a bad precedent for the Working Committee to override the democratic right of a Provincial Committee by declaring its elected President as disqualified to hold the position. If this act goes unchallenged, there will be no guarantee whatsoever for the internal democracy of the Congress. The precedent is all the more dangerous because the encroachment upon the democratic right of a provincial organization takes place on a very flimsy pretext. The more democratic course should have been for the Working Committee to call upon the primary Congressmen of Bengal to disown a Provincial Executive with its office-bearers which have committed a breach of discipline. In any case, if the supreme leadership of the Congress cannot secure the support of the majority of the membership in any particular province, its efforts to assert its authority are bound to complicate the situation there. That is the worst part of the Working Committee resolution. It will create a very difficult and delicate situation in Bengal.

I am very anxious about that possibility. I do not know how the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee will react to the resolution of the Working Committee, nor do I know if Subhas Babu will stick to the reasonable and conciliatory attitude that he adopted towards the end of the conflict. However, if he allows himself to be provoked once again, he will be helping neither himself, nor the political life of Bengal. Therefore I earnestly hope that he will reconcile himself to the regrettable situation which, to a large extent, is his creation, and discourage any idea of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee resisting the Working Committee resolution. Having a formal majority, he might be tempted to do so, but this will spell disaster for the political life of Bengal. There will be two Congress organizations in the province, one of which, headed by himself, will surely be disaffiliated. Besides, it is a fact that there is a good deal of discontent against him in Bengal; there he has not acted very democratically. That being the case, he should be shrewd enough to anticipate

that an artificially created majority might not stand by him in a hopeless conflict with the entire Congress organization of the country. The evil effect of the unwise (or is it vindictive?) action on the part of the Working Committee will be headed off only if a majority of Congressmen in Bengal can act with foresight and idealism.

128. 'Release the Political Prisoners'

AICC Papers, File No. G-46, 1939, NMML.

[This file contains several representations on the release of political prisoners. Representations came from, among others, the Marampalli Village Congress Committee and from the Dacca Congress Committee.]

Bezwada

1 September 1939

Under the joint auspices of the Town Congress Socialist Party, the Youth League, the Forward Bloc, the Press Workers' Union and the Government and Kothapet Labour Associations, a procession of local Congressmen, Socialists and workers started from the Hanumantharaya Grandhalayam at 5 p.m. last evening (31.8.39) and terminated at the Gandhi Park where a public meeting was held to demand the release of political prisoners, in pursuance of the resolution of the Left Consolidation Committee. Nearly 300 persons attended the meeting.

Sjt V.L. Sastri, a local Congressman, who presided on the occasion, severely condemned the policy of the Bengal and Punjab Governments in not respecting the public opinion by releasing the political prisoners in their respective provinces. He deplored the presence of Labour and Kisan prisoners in the various Congress Provinces, and urged their release, thus paving the way for the release of the politicals in the non-Congress Provinces.

Mr K.V. Narayana Rao, MLA who spoke next, appealed to the Muslims present to co-operate with the Congressmen and bring pressure on the Huq Ministry, which promised the release of political prisoners in its Election Manifesto, to fulfil its promise. He further requested the Madras Ministry to release the Munagala Kisan Satyagrahis numbering about 30, who are not even classified as politicals.

Com. P. Sundarayya, Secretary of the Andhra Congress Socialist Party, and Messrs Rangachari and Raghavarao Gupta also criticized the Madras Govt for not releasing the Munagala Satyagrahis. Comrades K. Satyanarayana and K.L. Narasigham deplored the backwardness of the Madras Ministry in not introducing at least separate classification for political prisoners, as in the case of the UP, Bihar, Orissa and CP.

The following resolution was unanimously passed by the meeting by show of hands:

'This meeting severely condemns the attitude of the Bengal and Punjab Governments for not respecting public opinion by releasing the political prisoners confined in their jails; and expresses its approval of the Satyagraha campaign which is to be started by the Bengal PCC.

'This meeting deplores the imprisonment of Labour and Kisan Satyagrahis in the Congress Provinces also, and requests the Congress Ministries to release such prisoners immediately, especially the Munagala Satyagraha prisoners in this Province. This meeting further urges all Provincial Governments, Congress as well as non-Congress, to repeal all repressive laws like Sec. 144 Cr. PC 124(A), etc.'

Andhra Provincial Congress Committee
Party Office

129. Socialists and the Congress

Report of a meeting held under the joint auspices of the Madras Congress Socialist Party and the Madras Electric Tramway and Madras Electric Supply Corporation Workers' Association, on 2 September 1939. Public (General) Deptt, 1939, Tamilnad Archives.

2 September 1939

B. Srinivasa Rao in the course of his speech observed that the Congress had been developing at every stage and that the extremists of yesterday were found to be the moderates of today. Years ago when Tilak put forth a programme based on strong nationalism, the moderates in the Congress at that time like Gokhale, Shastri and others found it unpalatable and eventually severed their connection with the Congress. In like manner, Sardar Patel and his group, who, about a decade ago, had been thought to be extremists in the Congress were now being viewed as moderates as they were unable to subscribe to the radical programme of the present-day Leftists. It should therefore be deduced that the Leftists in the Congress had no quarrel with the moderate elements in it but only desired that the forward policy of the Congress should be adhered to. The Congress had time and again passed the resolution of the national demand and had declared that the hour that Britain was involved in a war, should be seized for securing the freedom of India. Seeing the international situation, when Britain was confronted with an imminent war was ripe, Bose had been advocating to turn it to securing the independence of India. Congressmen like Sardar Patel and others, whose revolutionary mentality had been tamed as a result of the parliamentary programme of the Congress, were frustrated at the propaganda made by the Leftists and had succeeded in turning the latter out on the pretext of disciplinary action. The speaker desired to point out that Indians should seize the present opportunity for overthrowing British rule in India. With that end in view, countrywide propaganda should be made for refusing any help to Britain in the shape of men and money for the present war, by organizing an intensive no-tax campaign and by bringing about a general strike of all the workers in India. The Labour Unions and the Kisan Sabhas might usefully be used to this end...

Referring to the forthcoming Working Committee meeting convened for reviewing the present international crisis, he felt doubtful if the Congress would stick on to its radical policy. He even felt that the present leaders of the Congress would not hesitate to come to terms with the British Government. It was therefore the duty of all Congressmen to see that the Congress was captured by the Leftist group by electing them to all Congress Committees and he appealed that they should all become members of the Congress. In conclusion he also appealed to the workers to be present in large numbers at the central station the next morning for giving a fitting reception to Bose.

130. Narmda Prasad Singh to M.N. Roy, 9 September 1939

M.N. Roy Papers, File No. S-33, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML.

... I had a mind to congratulate you on your right lead given to your followers and on your wire to Jawaharlalji. In spite of my differences with the so-called Rightists, I strongly and honestly feel that we cannot do without them. I cannot understand how we can maintain the fighting strength of the Congress if we do not observe even an ordinary organizational discipline. I can understand our pressing for radical programme in the meetings of the Congress Committees but I fail to appreciate an open defiance of the highest Congress authorities. I am convinced that the first revolution (if you like you may call it a feudal revolution) can be brought about in the country by

the present Congress only and therefore we cannot treat this fighting organization as a platform or a debating society. With our divided loyalty we cannot serve the Congress and through it the country.

My political study is nothing as compared with yours and therefore I would like to know it from you whether any fighting organization has ever been able to achieve its objective anywhere under any circumstances with its members of divided allegiance. Its members can hold different views and should have the fullest liberty to propagate the same, but among its members alone. They should not however be allowed to belong to different political parties.

We have only theoretical knowledge of political revolutions but you have some practical experience of the same and have worked with those who can be called the practical pioneers of revolutionary science and therefore I want to learn from you whether the Congress, with its members belonging to different political groups such as Socialist Party, Forward Bloc, Kisan Sabha, etc., will ever be able to achieve its objective, and will be able to maintain its revolutionary character and strength and above all the mutual goodwill and trust.

In my humble opinion politics is a practical science and I feel that at present I cannot visualize a Congress, governed and controlled by leaders who have not got that old man's confidence. I am certainly for the change of the present leadership of the Congress but not in a way which will impair the very effectiveness of it. It is for these reasons that in the open session as well as in the AICC on vital questions I cast my votes some times even against my own views because I demand that we should not press a programme on the present leadership to the breaking point.

This attitude of mine may be due to my confused thinking but unless I am convinced otherwise I stick to it. The result is that I have begun to fly from there in action of whom I am one ideologically. I have written all this to you with a view to know your views. If you agree with me then you should give a bold lead in the matter notwithstanding any amount of 'malicious attacks' from those so called radicals, out of whom—I may be excused to say so—not even ten percent are sincere and prepared to undergo the sacrifice which their radical views require. Owing to the advent of the Congress Ministries, radicalism has become very cheap and to some extent paying also in the sense that it gives unexpected prominence in newspapers...

131. 'Majaz—A Revolutionary Hindustani Poet' by Sajjad Zaheer

National Front, 10 September 1939.

The Progressive Writers' Movement is having a deep effect on Urdu literature. Wherever Urdu literature flourishes groups of young writers are found whose poems, short stories, essays, novels and plays are imbued with new thoughts. The basic 'motifs' of the new literature are a sharp break from the traditional ideas—political and social—and a definite and clear orientation of the writer towards the masses and their revolutionary ideology.

Poet of the New School

ISRAR-UL-HAQ MAJAZ is one of the outstanding representatives of the new school. While a student at the Muslim University, Aligarh, he came under the influence of the socialist movement and was a member of a socialist students study circle. It was during this period (1933) that he wrote his first revolutionary poem '*Inquilab*'. Already, in this poem Majaz shows great command over his medium, and a dexterity of technique which is remarkable for its fluency, construction and choice of words. The first half of the poem describes the world of pleasure—of those melodies 'which make one forget the pains of life—the very atmosphere is a trance—and which make the stars dance.' The second half where the poet exhorts his 'friend' to throw away his lyre contains a

romantic description of the revolution. *'The columns of the Palaces of Pleasure will shake with fear and fall down... and the red Wine will turn into blood... and of the ultimate triumph of the workers and the end of the capitalist system, when the sun of our country's freedom would shine in the red evening sky with a thousand glories.'*

A strong romantic strain is noticeable in this poem, yet it does not sound hollow or flare. The effects created through poetic exaggeration are expressions of profound sentiment generally felt; the exaltation of feeling which the poet aims to achieve is based on intense passion, not in spurious fantasy.

Contact with Working Class

After his graduation from the Muslim University, Majaz continued his studies in the MA class and before he could take this other degree he took on a job with the All India Radio at Delhi. As was to be expected he could not pull on with his unimaginative and bureaucratic superiors. He was hardly one year at Delhi, when he had to resign his job. After this period a new period of Majaz's poetry begins. A year of employment at Delhi gives place to a period of unemployment and great poetic activity. Majaz was coming more and more into touch with the workers and the working class movement; from being a poet of the advanced students and romantic youth, Majaz was now beginning to develop a more serious socialist outlook. He spent a few months in Bombay and became popular with the workers of Madanpura. He attended and presided over their *mushairas* (poetic recitals) and his poems, now simpler and more intensely felt, became very popular with the workers.

The years 1937 and 1938 saw Majaz as one principal contributor to the weekly Urdu paper *Hindustan* started from Lucknow by a group of prominent Muslim Nationalists. Some of Majaz's finest poems are of this period. It is during the latter part of this same period that Majaz wrote his proletarian songs which are now deservedly becoming popular among the workers of Cawnpore, Bombay and other places where Hindustani is spoken and understood.

Ideological Content

From the ideological point of view, a distinct clarity of thought and a fuller assimilation of Marxism is discernible in his poetry of the period. In a passionate denunciation of capitalism in his well known poem 'Sarmayadari' (capitalism), Majaz does not fail to indicate the cruel, yet progressive role of capitalism, and one can hear an echo of the Communist Manifesto in these lines:

*It writes the balance sheet of its wealth with blood-ink,
Its palaces are built on a foundation of human skeletons,
It deprives men of their honour, makes them lose their sense of shame,
And robs human beings of their very humanity...*

A special mention must be made here of the songs and those poems of Majaz which have been written in a very simple style. They herald a new phase in Majaz's poetry which is very much to be welcomed. These poems are:

'Hamara Jhanda' (Our Banner)—the most popular of his songs; 'Mazdoor ke geet' (Workers' Songs); 'Ghaddar' (Traitor); 'Nanhi Pujaran' (The Little Devotee).

The proud self-confident notes of his 'Our Banner' are magnificent in their classic simplicity:

*Like lions we march ahead;
And with the grace of clouds,
Singing the song of life,
Far to-day we hold aloft the Red Banner.*

The short meter, quick rhythm, the easy and commonly understood Hindustani of these poems and songs are combined with subtlety of thought and irony of a very refined kind. This is specially noticeable in 'Ghaddar' and 'Nanhi Pujaran'.

The traitor as painted by Majaz is no evil-smelling villain. He is:

*Of good nature, good behaviour and good temperament
His accent soft and speech sweet,
It is difficult for you to detect him,
But listen and mark my words,
Be on your guard friend! There goes the traitor!*

Popular Poet

It is reported that when Majaz recited this poem to the workers at Cawnpore, they showed their appreciation by loud acclamations and some of them even shouted out the names of certain treacherous labour leaders. During the last six months Majaz has increased his contact with the working class and the peasantry of north India. He now lives in Lucknow but is a frequent visitor to Cawnpore. A few months ago, he presided over the *Mushaira*, organized by the Cawnpore workers where poems regarding the proletarian and the anti-imperialist struggle were recited. It was for this occasion that Majaz composed his remarkable poem 'Mazdoor Hain Hum' which begins:

Mehnat seye mana chaar hain ham
(Though our bodies ache with incessant toil)

Already very popular with the Muslim educated youth, Majaz has now attained popularity with the workers of Cawnpore who consider him to be 'their own poet' (*Hamara Shair*).

Majaz published a collection of his poems less than a year ago. The first edition is already sold out—a remarkable achievement for any Urdu author.

132. M.N. Roy to Narmda Prasad, 16 September 1939

M.N. Roy Papers, File No. S-33, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML.

... While fully agreeing with you that nothing should be done to weaken the Congress, I do not believe that under its present leadership it will ever go anywhere near its goal. The present situation, for example, is being hopelessly bungled. I am realistic enough to know that and must face accomplished facts and work with the available material. Therefore, on my release from jail, I offered my services to the present leaders of the Congress. I still believe that, if I were given the opportunity to place whatever little experience I have at the disposal of the Congress, the situation would have been different. But I was mistrusted and my services were spurned, even if some of the important members of the present leadership believed that they would be valuable. What could one do under that situation. It would be beneath my dignity to act as a camp-follower of the right wing; nor would it serve any useful purpose. Yet, I never joined in indiscriminate opposition or the pseudo-leftist stunts.

My criticism is not directed against any individual. I never questioned the motive of the present leaders. I believe they are as patriotic as anyone else. But good intentions do not take us very far in politics. My complaint against the present leadership is that it always talks through the hat, excluding the old man although even he lately is getting diplomatic. Take the present situation for example. The old man has quite clearly said that there can be no fight. Why, then, all this temporizing and meanwhile mystifying the country with a thick cloud of high-sounding phrases in

which the resolution of the Working Committee is couched. Why not be honest and straightforward? Realizing that nothing more can be done under the given situation, formulate the minimum conditions on which some sort of an interim arrangement will be made. As a matter of fact, for the keen observer, such an attitude simply reveals lack of moral courage and weakness. I am definitely of the opinion that the leaders are not leading the country. They are simply letting things drift, hoping that something will happen some how. On the other hand, having the sentimental support of the unthinking crowd, they easily prevent others from doing anything effective. That being the case nothing serious is going to happen to this country in the near future. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that it will be simple waste of time for me to carry on trying to do things which only make me the object of malicious attacks by the pseudo-radicals who are imbecile as well as insincere.

Under the given situation, nothing can be done, not even express one's opinion. While our leaders are sending out clarion calls for India to think in terms of independence, we are being deprived of the most elementary freedom of speech and the parallel governments in eight provinces are either helpless or are convinced with this intolerable repression. Personally we are going to be starved by this war for democracy. All these years, we have been earning our living by contributing articles to papers. Now they are no longer accepted simply because of the name of the author. The editors are so scared that they even do not see what is written. Our leaders will express resounding sympathies for the Polish democracy (by the way, the Polish Government was also Fascist), but would not care a bit if men like us are simply starved to death. Of course, we should accept it as in the game. But one cannot help feeling bitter.

This being the case, for the moment, we must find some way of earning a living. Anticipating this crisis, we started this Association which, in addition to its main purpose, could provide us with the source of a little income. But being occupied with political matters, we could not build it up. Even now it is very difficult to raise the few thousand rupees we need for it. Promises are profuse, but seldom realized. I am sure that you could help if you realized the difficulty of our position. On your business tour, you come in touch with people who can be easily persuaded to buy some of our shares. In a helpless position, I am compelled to take the liberty of appealing to you to render that help. I am sure you will not disappoint.

133. Maginots and Siegfrieds in Congress

Article by Rammanohar Lohia, *Bombay Chronicle*, 26 September 1939.

26 September 1939

Sjt Subhas Chandra Bose has announced an Anti-Imperialist Conference to be held at Nagpur on the two days immediately preceding the All India Congress Committee meeting at Wardha. It is difficult to conceive of a closer nearness of dates, places and functions between any two meetings. Is it a master stroke or risky childishness?

The Left Consolidation Committee will organize the anti-Imperialist Conference. It is no use repeating here the arguments which made some of us dissociate ourselves from the Left Consolidation. I will only say that events have justified us and the danger of the Left Consolidation Committee attempting to usurp the functions of the Indian National Congress has not yet abated. That, however, is eminently a concern of the Left Consolidation. I may only legitimately enquire if the Anti-Imperialist Conference is being held with the consent and approval of the different parties of the Left Consolidation. Or, the usual bamboozling tactics have been adopted in the hope that when the deed is done, sanction will surely be obtainable.

Let us examine the Anti-Imperialist Conference on its merits. The first argument in its favour is that which is usually advanced for pressure-groups. The decisions of Nagpur and the demonstration of public support behind them might conceivably influence the deliberations at Wardha. Even in normal times action based on this argument is like a double-edged sword; in times such as today it has the unfortunate single edge. Wardha will only be irritated by Nagpur and, in place of the fluidity of common endeavour, we will have a hardening. Let us meet in the All-India Congress Committee without Magnots and Siegfrieds separating us.

The second point in favour of the conference may be presumed to be its effect on the temper of the people. The Conference is likely to give its participants an added sense of strength. The power born out of the sense of unity, unity of such forces as are likely to attend the Conference, will be theirs. This power may have some effect on the temper of the people. I concede this point in favour of the Conference. But I may ask, at what cost?

I may be permitted to use illustrations. At an anti-war meeting held at Nagpur while the Working Committee was meeting at Wardha, a provincial organizer of the Forward Bloc was particularly eloquent over the attitude of Mahatma Gandhi, which he had completely failed to understand, and attempted to name people he thought were traitors to the country's cause. Even an indolent and otherwise friendly audience rebelled. Another provincial organizer of the Bloc has a day or two ago written something of little dignity, less taste and no capacity at all of doing good.

Such people and their ideas may not have exclusive control over the proposed Conference but they will have their fair share. They are irrepressible whenever an opportunity is available. Must we give them this opportunity?

Whatever little radicalization of a section of the people may be achieved at this Conference will be at the terrible expense of reducing the total effectiveness of the people. Genuine radicalization is not born out of the disease of mind which reveals in sectarian exploits, utter disregard of realities and brave fatalism. The future does not take care of those who do not take care of the present. The present belongs very much to the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress and rightly so. The Working Committee is the central point of an instrument that has sought to weld into unity a people of immense numbers and diverse languages and tastes. The Congress is today engaged in completing the task of building out of the Indian people the Indian State, a task of such dimensions as have no parallel in recorded history. Words of disrespect to the Congress or its central authority are useful neither in the present nor in the future. They are not useful in the present as they cannot influence the majority of the Indian people; for, the Working Committee can yet master the impulses of the people much more effectively than any other group can. They are not useful for the future; for, whatever happens the Working Committee will not have lost all its influence and prestige at the end of the present crisis. At its worst, the end of the war will produce a situation in which no single central authority of the people exists.

This is not to say that I can in no event think of action which is different from that ordered by the Working Committee. There are occasions when some of us contemplate with dread that such an action might be necessary. And we will undertake that action, earnestly clinging to the idea that it is a difference in judgment and not in desire. We will devoutly hope that the conditions which brought about the difference in judgment will vanish. Our prayer will be that the central point of this fascinating instrument, the Indian National Congress, may be further refined at our expense.

Such action cannot be the outcome of a Conference like the one proposed. The proposed Conference is bad in practice, as we have already seen, and it is bad in theory. To this conference are invited all anti-imperialist organizations and individuals. Even the wildest flight of my imagination fails to see how the organizers of the Conference propose to conquer the limitation of

space; how will they crowd together all anti-imperialist individuals in India in a single place. Do they think that anti-imperialist individuals number in tens and hundreds or even in thousands? And fancy having a conference of all anti-imperialist organizations without the Congress in it; one might as well have a public meeting without the public. I hope that Shri Subhas Chandra Bose will find it possible to cancel his Conference.

134. The Communist Party of India

Home (Political), File No. 7-7/1939, NAI.

Secret

No. 6/Bol./39-V.

INTELLEGEENCE BUREAU (HOME DEPARTMENT)

Government of India

New Delhi, dated 18 November 1939

CIRCULAR MEMORANDUM

1. The start of preparation for a 'non-violent' campaign announced by the Congress Working Committee as a corollary to the Congress official attitude towards the war, has been welcomed throughout left-wing circles as heralding the approach of their long-awaited opportunity. For several weeks past, left-wing leaders have been completing and secretly distributing pre-arranged plans for a wide-spread revolutionary campaign, against the day when the inception of a resistance movement by Congress will enable them to translate these plans into direct action.

2. Communists occupy a distinctive position at the head of the left-wing movement and are determined to use every opportunity which political events offer to obtain control of the Congress machine and convert the movement for national independence into a violent revolution. The purpose of the attached Survey is to present the general outline of recent developments in this connection.

3. The Survey is divided into three parts, and is for departmental use only.

Parts I and III should be accorded the normal security due to Special Branch secret records; Part II contains specially secret matter which should be given only very limited circulation, and be finally kept in the personal custody of the officer to whom it is sent. Nothing in this survey may be used for publicity purposes. It is intended, however, to issue shortly a less detailed account on similar lines to enable a public exposure of the leftist aims.

Deputy Director (E)

To:

1. DIG of Police, CID, Assam, Shillong.
2. Senior Supdt of Police, Quetta.
3. Spl Supdt of Police, IB, Bengal, Calcutta.
4. Spl Asst to DIG of Police, CID, Bihar, Patna.
5. Deputy Commissioner of Police, SB, Bombay.
6. Deputy Commissioner of Police, SB, Calcutta
7. Asst to DIG of Police, SB, CP Nagpur.
8. Supdt of Police, CID, Delhi.
9. Supdt of Police, CID & SB, Madras.
10. Asst to IG of Police, CID, NWFP, Peshawar.
11. Supdt of Police, I/c CID, Orissa, Cuttack.
12. Asst to DIG of Police, CID, Bombay Province, Poona.

13. Asst to DIG of Police, SB, Punjab, Lahore.
 14. Supdt of Police, I/c SB & CID, Sind, Karachi.
 15. Asst to DIG of Police, SB, UP, Lucknow.
 16. Inspector-General of Police, Ajmer–Merwara, and Police Asst to the Hon'ble the Resident for Rajputana, Ajmer.
 17. DIG of Police, Western India & Gujarat States, Rajkot.
 18. Secretary to the Resident, Baroda & Gujarat States, Baroda.
 19. Asst to the Hon'ble the Resident for Central India Criminal Branch, Indore.
 20. Secretary to the Resident for Deccan States & Resident at Kolhapur.
 21. Resident at Gwalior and for the States of Rampur and Benares.
 22. Asst to the Resident, Kashmir, Sialkot.
 24. Secretary to the Hon'ble the Resident, Mysore, Bangalore.
 25. Resident in Madras States, Trivandrum.
 26. Secretary to the Hon'ble the Resident, Punjab States, Lahore.
 27. Secretary to the Resident, Eastern States, Calcutta.
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Copy forwarded to:

1. Deputy Director, Intelligence, G. of I., Peshawar.
2. Senior Asst Director, Intelligence, G. of I., Quetta.
3. Central Intelligence Officer, Calcutta.
4. Central Intelligence Officer, Bombay
5. Central Intelligence Officer, Madras.
6. Central Intelligence Officer, Lucknow.
7. Central Intelligence Officer, Lahore.
8. Central Intelligence Officer, Karachi.
9. Central Intelligence Officer, Patna.
10. Central Intelligence Officer, Nagpur.

PIM

17.11.39

Deputy Director (E)

Secret

COMMUNISM IN INDIA—A Survey of Recent Developments
(up to 31-10-1939)

Part I

1. Left wing pressure, whether in the labour and peasant movements or in the Congress itself, continues to gather force. Methods and tactics vary from time to time to meet changes in party alignment and policy, but the general trend of all leftist activities is directed to perverting the Indian national independence movement so that it may be a means of implementing the fundamental Communist programme as announced in the 'Draft Platform of Action' (vide 'India and Communism' 1935, App. II). The Communist Party in India has no more than a few hundred members. But its influence is to be measured not so much by its size as by its ability to guide other groups and organizations; it is not so much the open activities of Communists and the direct influence of the illegal Communist Party which call for serious attention as the insidious and seditious manner in which they are able to penetrate other organizations, and the indirect hold which Communist teachings exert over the national movement.

2. Communist policy in India is mainly opportunist. But there is at the same time a consistent factor in the use of Congress as a cover for activities aimed at the capture of political power—first within the Congress Socialist Party and ultimately in the Congress organization as a whole. Success in carrying out this plan depends on the concealment of the real objective under a cloak of legitimate agitation, unity with the Congress Socialists, and avoidance of a breach with the main Congress body—conditions which suit the convenience of the Communist leaders in India and satisfy their advisers abroad. In an exactly similar though less clearly defined manner, the programmes of terrorist and other extremist bodies, peasant agitators, the many socialist groups, and Subhas Chandra Bose's forward bloc aim at utilizing constitutional opposition as a stepping stone to mass revolution. Thus, the Communist and the various constituents of what may loosely be termed the 'left wing' are properly to be regarded as actively assisting a common programme and forming complementary parts of a general revolutionary movement.

3. The ease with which Communists have been able to penetrate labour and peasant bodies throughout the Congress organization and assume the role of 'local leaders' is illustrated by the recent success of the Communist minority in the Bombay Trade Union Congress in obtaining the passage of a resolution in favour of one-day protest strikes in Bombay on October 2nd against the wishes of the moderate non-Communist majority. Detailed examination of the personnel of Provincial and local Congress Committees reveals a surprisingly large number of known Communists and active sympathizers (who do not necessarily acknowledge party membership) as secretaries and office bearers. Throughout the Congress Socialist Party also, Communists are in complete control of many of the subordinate socialist groups; and Communists dominate the labour, peasants, and youth movements. The reason for the ascendancy is to be found in the comparative apathy of the non-Communists as contrasted with the zeal and better organization of the Communist workers.

4. During the summer months of 1939, Communist policy underwent a significant change as the result of secret discussions between leaders in Bombay on advice received from abroad. From a carefully worded declaration published in the *New Age* and other communist organs it is known that this advice deprecated direct attacks on the 'compromising right wing' and criticism of Gandhi's doctrines, for the reason that they provoked retaliation. It went on to say that, in view of the sure approach of an international crisis that would envelop India, energies must be concentrated on uniting Communist, socialist, peasants, student and labour groups into a single 'united left front' capable, by virtue of the support of the masses, of directing Congress policy by 'pressure from below instead of control from above' when the crisis broke, and of confronting the right wing leaders with the alternative of adopting a radical programme or suffering defeat and eclipse. Various attempts have been made to give effect to this programme, but left wing groups remain distrustful of each other.

5. The success made by the Communists of their policy of 'infiltration' caused the resignation of four leading Congress Socialists (Masani, Asoke Mehta, Lohia, and Achyut Patwardhan) from the Socialist Party last July, as a protest against Communist domination. In a statement issued by these socialist leaders, they stated that Communist infiltration had gone very far, and was interfering with the free initiative and development of the Indian socialist movement. They went on to declare that communism was a disruptive force and, being under the control of the Soviet Government, detrimental to the national movement in India.

'There are many fundamental differences between our principles and approach and those of the Communists, such, for instance, are the attitude towards the Congress, the adherence to peaceful and legitimate means; and the attitude towards the Soviet Government'.

This statement thus publicly acknowledged a large measure of success in the Communists' first objective—the capture of the Congress Socialist Party—and certain subsequent withdrawals from the Socialist Party have left the way still clearer for the Communists.

6. Over the question of the Congress attitude towards the war, a section of Bengal Communists was prepared to follow Subhas Chandra Bose in independent action, but Communists and socialists in general wanted to force him to accept their left wing consolidation within the Congress movement. It is typical of Communist methods that they continued nonetheless to maintain secret relations with Bose and there is clear evidence that the plans of the Forward Bloc and the conduct of Bose's whole movement are largely in the hands of his Communist lieutenants. Although Bose failed to persuade the Communists and Socialists to join his Forward Bloc or subscribe to a left wing revolt under his leadership, Communist plans—and in particular the present 'war resistance' revolutionary effort—include him as the central leader, and rely on his Bengal and student supporters in their calculations, as well as on his ability to make a popular appeal to the masses. Bose's relations with the Communist movement have been well stated by M.N. Roy.

Opportunism is the common motive of Bose and the Communists. Bose requires some pretence of leftism and organized support; the Communists cannot do without a popular hero.

Further evidence of Bose's close connection with secret Communist organizational plotting is revealed in the part played by him in the observance of the 'National Struggle Week' early in September, in the anti-Imperialist Rally at Nagpur on October 8th and 9th, and in the Left Consolidation Committee's meeting at Lucknow a week later. Although he showed himself on these occasions as anxious as ever to launch an independent civil disobedience movement, he was forced to abandon the idea by the Communists whose attitude, according to reliable information, had the support of Nehru's personal assurance that a little patience would see both Congress back in the fighting line and an opportunity for combined action. This assurance, incidentally, explains the present restrained conduct of the Communists, Socialists and Kisans and their followers, although latest reports indicate a strong desire to be up and doing. For instance, Ranga, the Madras Kisan leader, is particularly impatient at the inactivity of the right wing, which, he says gives free scope for the 'suicidal' activities of the minorities, and makes for increasing difficulty in getting a mass movement started when the time comes. While Bose reserves to himself and his followers the right of independent action, he is said to be against secret activity as secrecy is inconsistent with mass agitation. The real attitude of the Communists towards the orthodox Congress finds expression in an illegal leaflet distributed by Bengal members of the party in October:

We know independence cannot be won without a fierce revolutionary struggle resulting in the overthrow of the foreign government. The right wing want independence for India, but not with the help of a revolution. This class fears revolution because any revolution if successful must develop into a Soviet revolution, which means the abolition of private property and the rule of the workers and peasants.

Thus, according to the latest Communist Party circular, a Congress Satyagraha campaign will serve no useful purpose unless the Communists take part in it—which they must prepare to do.

7. Copies of the Communist plans and instructions which have fallen into police hands show the existence of a common programme for communists, socialists, workers and peasants. Preparations in pursuance of this programme have received encouragement from the hesitation and general political suspense in Congress governed provinces since war was declared. The plans include the unsettling of labour by suggesting demands for 25% wage increases and dearness allowances, and of kisans with demands for remission of rent and a reduction of taxes. These proposals are accompanied by prolix instructions to the various centers explaining that 'mixing

anti-war propaganda with these demands will enable us to mobilize the workers and peasants *en masse*'. The instructions, which reveal a marked ability in planning, may be summarized as follows: every district to select two or three members for organizational war 'underground' in the event of Congress deciding on 'war resistance'; another batch for open work in mass organizations without directly engaging in anti-work propaganda; the remainder to carry on their 'day to day work' (one or two at a time to indulge in anti-war speeches) and to go under ground only when forced to; each party member to form his own group of active sympathizers and arrange to employ them usefully; in every district, communist literature, both legal and illegal, to be removed to safe hiding places; old dumps (that is repositories for correspondence, propaganda literature and the like) to be treated as exposed and new dumps arranged for; hiding places to be settled for underground members, and new personnel detailed through whom they will continue to function; pass-words; places for contacting with party members from outside; two addresses each for communications and parcels to facilitate contact with the centre; arrangement by districts of 'technical' staff of unmarked members for the distribution of illegal leaflets. 'Responsible comrades' are known to have been called to Bombay in September to be coached in this scheme. P.C. Joshi's views on the 'secret' aspect of the instructions show that nothing is to be sacrificed through undue haste or lack of caution. He has explained that workers should be approached individually at their homes and not at the mills or factories; similarly, propaganda among villagers should be carried out in a way that will not raise the suspicions of the police, preferably through the agency of a selected local congress worker. Ghate also stresses the need for a slow cautious advance; the Communists need time in which to prepare and will not openly join terroristic or violent developments—they are to establish cells among factory and transport workers against the day when a general strike will be called. The deliberately methodical manner in which the ground is to be prepared for revolution is both remarkable and unusual. An explanation of the reversion to secret revolutionary activity and its purpose has also appeared in a violently worded illegal leaflet, produced by the Bengal Labour Party as the first of a weekly series entitled 'Political Circular'. It is also reported that the Benares Hindu University has been elected to be one of the 'places of shelter' for Communists and left wingers.

8. The adoption of an 'underground' system is obviously inspired by a desire to forestall a general round-up, which initially was genuinely feared. That the instructions are being closely followed is shown by the behaviour of Communist leaders. In Bombay, Dr Adhikari has already gone underground, and six others, including Randive, P.C. Joshi and Ajoy Ghosh, are ready to do so in case of need. Members for underground work have been designated in Madras, the United Provinces, Orissa and Bengal. When it appeared within a short space after the outbreak of war that there was to be no round-up and that Congress Ministries displayed an obvious reluctance to encourage any form of 'suppression' of anti-war activities, left wing agitators of all shades of radicalism were seized with an access of boldness which quickly produced a growing volume of open propaganda. This change from quiescence to widespread activity has been particularly noticeable in the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bombay and Bihar, where there has also been violent speaking, frequently accompanied by expression of radical hatred. In the United Provinces and Bihar in particular, and to a less extent in Bombay and Orissa, Socialists and Communists have discussed plans for organized sabotage, including the wrecking of communications, tampering with the loyalty of troops and police, and the creation of feelings of financial and economic instability. According to a recent report, the Cawnpore terrorist-Communists contemplate attempts on the lives of Government officials and loyalists (who are already being secretly marked down) and attacks on Police Stations in the event of Congress calling for Civil disobedience.

9. Propaganda by the dissemination of pamphlets and broadsheets occupies an important place in the Communist plan. S.V. Ghate has been invited to Bombay from Madras, where he is entrusted with the production of the *New Age*, to organize an underground press and renew his old contacts with press managers and workers. In the Punjab, a committee of three, headed by Ferozuddin Mansur, has been appointed to arrange for the issue of anti-war literature and to conduct propaganda among troops and the police. In several places Communist offices have closed down, and most of the so-called 'legal' publications have given place to violently seditious sheets and bulletins. Examples of the latter are Communist Bulletins Nos 1 and 2 (in Marathi) which appeared in Poona in the second half of October, claiming that in view of the strength created by 'states' peoples struggles, workers' struggles, class consciousness of the peasants, and the students movement', a 'direct fight against imperialism' was the proper course; red pictorial posters issued by the Bombay Communists suggestive of revolt to burst the shackles imposed by a government dependent on police batons and military bayonets; a leaflet issued by the Bengal Committee of the CPI entitled 'Imperialist War and the Communist Party's Declaration' (seized before it could be distributed); '*Ailan-I-Jang*', a weekly (or fortnightly) paper, for the distribution of which the Punjab committee of three was to be responsible. The last named publication, purporting to be edited by 'Dr Azid' (a fictitious name) and published by Communists in Lahore, appeared for the first time as an issue dated October 25th in the Punjab and NWFP. This leaflet which is cyclostyled, asserts that the Defence of India Act is a declaration of war against India's freedom and has barred legitimate protest so that secret methods must perforce be adopted. A list of specific grievances follows, including among others the impoverishment of the peasantry and the need for increased wages to meet the higher cost of living, and there are exhortations to join a mass revolutionary army of freedom. A set of revolutionary slogans is also given, including such phrases as 'spread sedition among the troops', and there are maliciously false and alarmist items of war 'news', obviously aimed at weakening morale. The appeal ends with a call to youth to bring about the destruction of British rule in terms of sacrifice and martyrdom reminiscent of the familiar type of terrorist propaganda of a few years ago. (Another '*Ailan-I-Jang*' in poster form, suspected to be the work of Tehl Singh, a Lahore terrorist, made its appearance in Lahore in the middle of October. It contained anti-recruitment propaganda. Seventy two copies were thrown into the regimental lines of the 19th Lancers at Lahore).

Part II

10. The foregoing summary of the more important features of the Communist movement for revolution in India contains in paragraph 4 mention of advice received from abroad prior to the outbreak of war. The Communist Party of Great Britain fulfils 'agency' functions on behalf of the Comintern in regard to India and is thus in a position to tender such advice to the latter as may from time to time seem necessary. Since war was declared, two communications are known to have been received containing guidance for the framing of Communist Policy in India. In the first, a letter written at the end of August, emphasis is laid on the need for preserving national unity at all costs:

We must use this crisis not just in the sense that the British confusion presents us with an opportunity to embarrass Britain, but in order to expose the whole Imperial system, the reactionary tendencies of Chamberlain and his allies.

In the second (Colonial Information Bulletin of 13-9-39) the importance of national unity is reiterated even more emphatically, and it concludes:

Finally, it is the task of Socialists and Communists, because of their international understanding, to understand and explain the significance of the war. Mere negative resistance to war would only indicate their failure to appreciate the difference between 1914 and 1939. The war against Hitler today is not an imperialist war of the 1914 type. This war is being fought by the people in defence of their rights, and it is these new forces that must and will be finally victorious.

This excerpt illustrates the outlook of the British Communists as it was prior to the invasion of Poland by the Soviet armies; with the collapse of Poland and the initiation of the Hitler–Stalin ‘peace’ manoeuvres, their outlook underwent a radical change: ‘the workers have no interest in this unjust war. This war is a fight between Imperialist powers for profits, colonies, and world domination’. This change of front is found reflected in latest Indian Communist propaganda; the target is throughout ‘British Imperialism’, with explanatory references to ‘the war on two fronts; the struggle against Hitler and the fight for world freedom’. In a widely distributed leaflet entitled ‘The Second Imperialist War’, written by G.M. Adhikari (one of the foremost Communists in India) and printed in Madras, British policy is distorted in the approved Soviet style, and it is stated that only with the replacement of the present form of government in Britain and France by genuine ‘anti-fascist popular governments’ will it be possible, with the help of the Soviet Union to convert the present imperialist war into a real democratic war against German fascism. This leaflet has been sent to all provincial centers as an examples for local productions—and has been adopted in the Punjab ‘*Ailan-i-Jang*’ referred to above in paragraph 9.

11. Letters of ‘advice’ from the CPGB have been supplemented by personal contacts between their leaders and visitors from India. Within recent months, R.S. Nimbkar, the Bombay Communist, Aftab Ali, the Calcutta lascars’ leader (both went to Europe as Indian delegates to the International Labour Conference at Geneva, and proceeded from there to England); A.P. Jain, Parliamentary Secretary (Revenue) to the UP Government, and Govind Sahai, Private Secretary to the Revenue Minister, UP, have been among those who are reported to have established contacts and to have attended the Communist Rally in London on July 22nd. While in England, Nimbkar maintained touch with Harry Pollitt, Ben Bradley, Ronald Kidd, Lester Hutchinson (of Meerut case fame) and Paul Robeson—now an ardent Communist—and later visited the USSR (on the strength of visas obtained through the good offices of the CPGB) accompanied by Jain, Govind Sahai and Rajani Patel, a member of the Indian Students Secret Communist Group in London. Nimbkar and Jain returned to India *via* Turkey, the former bringing with him messages of support for Indian workers from the USSR, the CPGB and the English workers, and also a message to the CPI leaders (from what source is not certain) urging them to carry on vigorous labour and peasant agitation during war time, and to create mass discontent leading up to a revolution. Since his return at the end of September, Nimbkar has addressed several meetings in Bombay and elsewhere in which he has preached the revolutionary messages entrusted to him abroad. In his more private utterance he has declared that Russia will actively help a working-class revolution in India, and that, if war between Britain and the Soviet Union takes place, the duty of all Indians is to help the Soviets with all the means within their power. In this connection, it is not without interest to note that two independent sources report that Indian Communists expect help from Russia *via* Afghanistan and that Adhikari, P.C. Joshi, and Ajoy Ghosh have already established contacts for the purpose. Rajani Patel is reported to have now gone to the USA with Mrs Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, a well-known Socialist, with the idea of visiting China on his way back to India.

12. There is other evidence that Soviet Russia’s recent policy has revived Indian Communists’ hopes of help from that quarter. (Relevant to this are the persistent rumours of Russia’s projected invasion of India *via* Iran and Afghanistan. Whatever the grounds for holding that such a plan actually exists, it is certain that the story is being fully exploited for its anti-British content by Nazi

propaganda agencies.) Communism in China has long given cause to be regarded as a source of inspiration to its counterpart in India, and suspicion on this account attached to the Indian Communist Party's efforts last year to include one of its members, Dr Ranendra Nath Sen, in the Congress Medical Mission to China. In this connection, it is worthy of note that a member of the Mission, Dr Bebesh Chandra Mukherji of Calcutta (who is not a Communist) who recently returned home from China, has stated in private conversation that Russia is successfully planning the Sovietization of China; that the Chinese Communist leaders are keenly interested in India and anxious to establish a regular connection; and that the Soviet next move will be in the direction of India. Tentative efforts to establish contact between Indian and Chinese Communist circles via Singapore (and possibly also the Burma frontier), with a suggestion to send—through the Malayan Communist Party—'Indian comrades to get military and political training in China at close quarters', are already in progress. Elsewhere in the east there have been irregular contacts through individuals with Ceylon, Burma, and Malaya, but so far without apparent co-ordination of programmes.

Part III

13. This review of the organization and plan of the Communists would present as incomplete picture if it did not indicate the nature of the common theme in all variations of left-wing activity and the opportunities thus offered to the numerically weak (but organizationally strong) Communists to take control of the movement capable of obtaining mass support. This theme envisages the immediate awakening of active opposition to all measures for the furtherance of British war aims, coupled with the more distant objective of the overthrow of British rule in India and the complete severance of the British connection. The revolutionary programmes of all the left-wing organizations which have been mentioned in the course of the foregoing survey have much in common, but there is divergence in the methods adopted, as also in the degree to which each has progressed towards the consummation of its plan of campaign.

14. The Congress Socialists' plan for war resistance includes open defiance of the Ordinances and Defence of India Act, wide-spread anti-recruitment propaganda, the boycott of British goods, organization of peasants agitation, and fomentations of general strikes among the workers. In furtherance of this programme the party executive have appointed a 'War Sub-Committee', with headquarters in Bombay, and branches in Lucknow, Allahabad, Cawnpore, Calcutta, Madras and Lahore. This sub-committee, at its meeting held in Lucknow towards the end of October, passed a resolution for the suspension of the constitution of all the party's provincial and subordinate organizations in favour of organization on an emergency basis. Instructions to this end have been issued to the leaders in charge of provincial groups to work openly and court arrest, leaving the direction of operations for the carrying out of the party programme to a secret organization working in the background. A show of conforming to the general spirit of the Congress policy was made when a memorandum entitled 'Four-Square against War' (drafted by Acharya Narendra Dev, Ram Manohar Lohia, and Jawaharlal Nehru) was recently presented to Gandhi on behalf of the party. In it the latter was asked if he would accord permission to the party to carry on anti-war propaganda as an aspect of the principle of non-violence. Apart from issuing a 'War Number' of the 'Congress Socialist', copies of which were distributed at the meeting of the AICC at Wardha in the second week of October, the party has done little towards implementing its propaganda proposals, although the Punjab, by reason of its pre-eminence as an army recruiting area, has witnessed a good deal of unostentatious canvassing for support.

15. So far as can be gathered, the All-India Kisan Sabha (peasants' league) has not yet formulated any definite scheme, but it is keenly alive to the opportunity now offered for exploiting present conditions in a bold bid for the abolition of the zamindari system. Proposals for an effective war

resistance programme include various kinds 'non-violent' activities: a no-tax campaign, the occupation of 'bakasht' lands in Bihar, wholesale railway travel without tickets, and an anti-recruitment drive in rural areas. These activities are to be supplemented by others of a secret and more violent nature, yet to be disclosed. At a meeting of the Central Kisan Council at Nagpur on October 9th, Swami Sahajanand, the Bihar peasant leader, was authorized to prepare in collaboration with Acharya Narendra Dev a statement on 'War and the National Struggle' for the information of the public, but it has not yet appeared.

16. The All-India Students Federation, with its provincial branches, and those of the Youth League, particularly in Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, the Central Provinces and the United Provinces, have latterly shown considerable zeal in forming anti-war committees, conducting propaganda in villages, distributing anti-war leaflets, organizing dramas and propaganda tours, and preparing the ground for a no-tax campaign by Congress is to be greeted by a one-day strike in schools and colleges.

17. Among the workers, agitation is for the time being mostly confined to railways and the jute and textile industries, the places chiefly affected being Cawnpore, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. The mischief makers are mainly Communists, who aim at interfering with the supply of war materials by stimulating unrest, partly through fabricated political and economic demands and partly through anti-war propaganda. These activities have received a strong check by the promulgation of emergency laws; but more trouble is to be expected, and Trade Unions have now received instructions to remove their documents and records to places of greater safety, so that in all eventualities, including also the possibility of trade-unionism being declared illegal, unions may still be able to function.

18. The Forward Bloc has taken its stand on the Congress Haripura resolutions on foreign policy and 'War Danger'. It demands that India's status as a belligerent should be vigorously challenged, that all attempts to exploit India's resources on account of the war should be resisted, and that measures should be taken to confound the Central Government's war preparations. No programme for implementing these demands has yet appeared, but there is talk of anti-recruitment measures, boycott of British goods, non-payment of taxes and the certain of unrest in industrial undertakings. Forward Bloc activities are particularly noticeable in the United Provinces, where Bishambar Dayal Tripathi, MLA of Unao, and Secretary of the All-India Forward Bloc organization, is reported to have sent out workers for anti-war propaganda in villages, not by lecturing in public, but through personal contact and discussion with peasants. These emissaries are held responsible for the distribution of certain anti-war leaflets which have recently come to notice in the Unao district.

19. Finally, there are the various terrorist organizations, though they are so strongly interconnected and so widely intermingled with the Communist and other left wing bodies as to make any sharply defined distinction impossible. Broadly speaking, however, the terrorist organizations of immediate importance for the purpose of this survey are the notorious Anushilan and Jugantar associations of Bengal and the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, which is based mainly on the United Provinces. (There are important links also with the Punjab, Bihar, Delhi and the Central Provinces, and lesser connections with the remaining Provinces and certain of the States.) Their objective, though variously stated, is in fact common to all three—mass revolution by armed violence. The mainsprings of the terrorist movement are in Bengal and the United Provinces, and as the result of careful and deliberate scheming the main organizations in the two Provinces have probably achieved a very fair measure of agreement as to the general plan of action. As in the case of the Communists, the terrorists work mostly under the cover of the Congress and other nationalist organizations. It is not possible within the compass of this survey to give

more than the barest outline of their programme. Briefly, it includes the collection of arms and ammunition, the arrangement of safe hiding places for arms and shelter for absconders and 'underground' workers, the collection of detailed information regarding the location of police stations, banks, arms shops, electric supply stations, etc., and particulars of the personnel and number of arms at police stations, the names of arms licenses and wealthy residents, the timings of trains carrying consignments of Government money, and so on. The outbreak of war has brought about increased activity among all revolutionary groups and more frequent references to a general uprising fomented by acts of sabotage and terrorism. Speakers at meetings in the United Provinces have advocated the murder of prominent officials and police officers, the destruction of railway bridges, bank raids and other acts of violence. Propaganda of all kinds calculated to inculcate a hatred of the British connection and the present form of Government in India is carried on ceaselessly wherever members of the terrorist groups exist, and its success can in part be measured by the considerable numbers of immature youths who are reported to have been recruited. Terrorist leaders in the United Provinces have already started going underground. While the Communists have adopted a policy of cautious delay for putting their full programme into action, the terrorists, though willing to make use of disorders resulting from any Congress declaration of civil disobedience for the execution of their plans, are said to be equally determined on violent action in the event of Congress remain quiescent.

135. Bose's Pleading for Mass Struggle

Hindustan Times, 26 November 1939.

25 November 1939

'The resignation of Congress Ministries must be followed by its logical conclusions,' declared Subhas Chandra Bose, presiding over the opening ceremony of the new premises of the Calcutta branch of the Forward Bloc at the Indian Association Hall this afternoon.

Bose welcomed all those assembled, including several leaders of left organizations from different provinces. 'We assemble here on a momentous occasion when important issues that have been before the country for some time past have to be solved,' said Bose, 'and it would be premature on my part to make a forecast of the decision that we shall arrive at. We are still in the midst of serious discussions.'

'Whatever the result of these discussions may be, one thing is perfectly clear that is we of the Left forces have decided that the resignation of the Congress Ministries must be followed to its logical conclusion.'

It would be desirable at this juncture for the Congress Working Committee, to give a lead to the country, continued Bose, but they, the Leftists, were not in the confidence of the Working Committee, and it would be hazardous on their part to predict what the Working Committee or Gandhi would decide. They hoped against hope that the Working Committee would rise to the occasion. They were, however, afraid that the Working Committee would not follow up the resignation of the Congress Ministries to its logical conclusion for several reasons.

They, of the Left group in the Congress, had to consider their duty in the event of that apprehension materializing. The Leftists know that in the event of the Working Committee or Gandhi failing to give the lead they would have to endeavour to do their duty towards the country. Bose hoped that the decision they would arrive at as a result of their discussion at the present meeting of the Working Committee of the Forward Bloc would enable them to determine their duty in a clear and unambiguous manner.

Referring to the new premises, Bose said that it would house not only the Provincial Forward Bloc but also the All India Committee of the Bloc and the office of its weekly journal.

The following is the continuation of Subhas Chandra Bose's article on the decisions of the Congress Working Committee which appeared yesterday:

'Let us, therefore, be perfectly plain and brutally frank, despite the danger of treading on other's corns. Nothing will be gained by mincing matters in this fateful hour of our nation's history. Such resolutions of the Working Committee are mere verbosity, calculated to hoodwink and bluff the innocent people of this country. Gandhi had been consistently telling us for a year or more that a national struggle is out of the question and that the country is not prepared for it—though it is a moot question as to who is not prepared, the country or the shining lights of the Working Committee. If Gandhi stood for a struggle from the beginning, much of the present controversy and dispute between the Right and the Left would not have arisen at all consequently, it would be futile to hope that at this late hour he will go back on all that he has said and all that he has stood for, during the last twelve months. Pressure of events and the force of public opinion may make him do a lot but they cannot induce him to launch a nation-wide struggle. It is quite a different thing to be pushed into the water from behind when the sight of it gives you cold hands and feet. Compare the inspiring articles of the *Young India* of 1921 with the stuff that is nowadays served out by the weekly *Harijan*, and you will at once see the difference. It is a changing world that we are living in and as the world changes, so do the personalities who dominate it.

'The problem today is not merely one of launching direct action. This has to be done effectively, if at all, otherwise it will amount to 'sabotaging' and not launching direct action.

'There is also the further question of pursuing it to a victorious end and avoiding any half-way house along our path. Let us be perfectly frank once again and say that even if direction action is started by the present Working Committee the Left will nurse the apprehension that Chauri Chaura and the Harijan movement or rather a new form of them, may appear any time in our movement when it gathers strength and volume.

'Is this apprehension justified—we may be asked. Of course it is—otherwise the drive against the Left would not have continued with unabated ferocity even after the declaration of the war. From all provinces news continue to pour in of this drive against the Left and in the case the Forward Bloc it amounts to a vendetta. Naturally, the wealth of the Working Committee is concentrated in Bengal and the Bengal portfolio has been taken over by the President himself. Word has gone round throughout the province that one has only to send in a complaint direct to the Working Committee or to the President from any remote corner, and he can be rest assured that the Provincial Congress Committee will at once be summoned to the dock. The impartial observer consequently finds homage paid to the ideals of unity and discipline in lengthy press statements, but, in actual practice, suppression and persecution of political opponents within the Congress. In the case of the British Government, you may undertake repeated pilgrimages to the Viceroy's house and lick the feet that kick you. In the case of your Leftist colleagues you may, nevertheless, consistently with your principles of truth and non-violence refrain from any demonstration of toleration, goodwill and generosity and continue with full wrath and ferocity a policy of vendetta.

'What is the moral of this sordid story? It is this that for the Rightists, British Imperialism is a lesser enemy than the Indian Leftist. You can compromise with the former, but in the case of the latter, war to the bitter end. And perhaps if British Imperialism strikes at Indian Leftism our Rightist friends will have no cause for regret.

'If India is to be freed, let her be freed by us or not at all', so says a Bengali adage and so think our Rightists today.'

136. Morality of Political Bankruptcy

Editorial, *Independent India*, 3 December 1939.

3 December 1939

Some correspondent writes that the criticism of the present Congress policy contained in our editor's letter to Gandhi may be interpreted as our suggesting that immoral means may be adopted for political purposes. The caption of Gandhi's reply 'Morals and Politics' may encourage such mis-interpretation. Last week we have made our position clear in this respect. We wrote: 'We advocate neither violence nor immorality when we maintain that all considerations on these scores are irrelevant for the political programme of the Congress. We demand a radical change of the Congress policy, not because it is non-violent and moral, but because it is ineffective and bankrupt'.

The point of dispute is whether the present policy of the Congress is effective or not. We maintain that the judgment should be made from the political point of view. The question is whether the policy is leading us towards the goal of political freedom; whether it can ever be effective for that purpose? Morally, it may be justifiable. But that justification would not prove its political effectiveness. Moreover, there is no absolute standard for morality, and what appears as moral to some, may not be accepted as such by others. On a future occasion, we shall discuss the problem from the theoretical and philosophical point of view.

For the moment, we only desire to emphasize that there can no longer be any doubt that the present policy is leading the Congress away from its political goal. It may serve the purpose of coming eventually to a 'honourable compromise' with British Imperialism, but it will never be able to secure complete political freedom for the masses of the Indian people. That being the case, our criticism of the policy is perfectly moral. Those who would try to misinterpret our attitude from the point of view of their peculiar conception of morality would be simply begging the question. That would be an admission of the inability to meet us on our own ground, and justification of political bankruptcy on the pretext of pseudo-morality.

The latest resolution of the Working Committee once again exposes the political bankruptcy of the present Congress leadership and consequently, of Gandhism. The resolution definitely commits the Congress to a policy of compromise as regards the political programme. The Working Committee will, therefore, continue to explore the means of arriving at an honourable settlement, even though the British Government has banged the door in the face of the Congress. This is the central point of the lengthy resolution which still maintains the original attitude which has driven the Congress leadership to the position of seeking for 'an honourable settlement' even after the opponent has flatly refused to make any helpful response.

This admission of defeat and quiet repudiation of the political object of the organization are justified by an insistence upon the constructive programme which has been proved to be unreliable in practice. Let it be emphasized again that the point at issue is not the merit or demerit of the social reform represented by the constructive programme. The point is that there is no relation between that programme and the political programme of the Congress.

Assuming that the programme is beneficial for the masses and that it can be realized before India has the political power to reconstruct her society and reform the habits of the masses of her population, it is difficult to see how that will help her in the struggle for political freedom. Yet Gandhi's basic contention is that Swaraj will automatically follow as soon as every Indian devotes some time daily to spinning and be non-violent in thought, word and deed. In addition to these basic conditions, there are the other items prohibition, removal of untouchability and Hindu-Moslem unity.

There is no dispute about these items. The last one, particularly, is evidently a condition for the attainment of the goal of national freedom. But it is neither a moral issue nor social reform. It is a political problem which has baffled the Congress leaders owing to their prejudices and non-political approach. The other two items cannot succeed as measures of social reform. Their causes are deep-rooted in the economic structure and cultural traditions of the country. Therefore, the evils will not be cured before a radical social reconstruction and a revaluation of cultural values. To insist upon the accomplishment of these necessary measures as the precondition for political freedom, is simply to put the cart before the horse. Political freedom will give the Indian people the power to carry through the revolutionary measures.

The Working Committee resolution still holds out the prospect of a 'fight' in some indefinite future, but 'makes it clear that the true test of preparedness for civil disobedience lies in Congressmen themselves, spinning and promoting the cause of khadi to the exclusion of mill-cloth, and deeming it their duty to establish harmony between the communities by personal acts of service to those other than members of their own community, and individual Hindu Congress men seeking an occasion for fraternizing with the Harijans as often as possible.' It is not explained how. 'By promoting this programme' the country will be prepared for future action. Obviously, there will be no political activity on the part of the Congress organization. It is difficult to see how a political organization can become ready for the capture of political power by virtue of non-political social reformistic activities on the part of its members.

The propaganda, carried on for years, created in the average Congressman a jail-going mentality. It was believed that Swaraj would be attained as soon as there would be sufficiently large number of people to court imprisonment. If that was the condition, the preparation seems to have been quite well made. From the beginning of the present crisis, there was a demand for Satyagraha from the rank and file, and it was reported that more Congressmen than ever were ready to go to jail. But the General of the Satyagraha has been, in the mean time, reconsidering his strategy. Now he declares that the weapon of courting imprisonment would no longer serve the purpose. He offers a new weapon—the charkha. Of course, it is not new. But today it has been placed at the centre of all activities. The Congress will be prepared for a 'fight' only when the Charkha-mindedness on the part of its members will replace, or perhaps supplement, the already attained jail-mindedness.

Again, let us consider the new weapon from the point of view of its effectiveness. What will happen when every single Congressman plies the charkha for several hours a day? How will it make him a more efficient fighter for political freedom? All sorts of fallacious economic theories have been advanced in support of the agitation for the introduction of charkha and the use of khadi. But no Congress leader has as yet given a satisfactory reply to this question. In the absence of that answer, one must assume that the present policy of the Congress does not visualize a fight for the capture of political power. Because, such a struggle is not possible without the participation of the entire organization and the effective participation in a political struggle is conditional upon an entirely different kind of preparation. Whatever may be its value, neither the charkha nor the whole of the constructive programme can ever serve the purpose of that preparation. Political activity is bound to awaken political consciousness. The Congress rank and file is debarred from all political activity and is ordered to devote itself to obviously irrelevant things, so that the leaders may not be embarrassed in the pursuance of their real policy which is to come to an 'honourable settlement' with Imperialism. And this policy is neither a drift, nor a deviation but follows logically from the fundamental principles of Gandhism. Since this policy is antagonistic to the political programme of the Congress from the point of view of the latter, it must be regarded as immoral.

It is time for the Congress rank and file to know that the present leadership excludes all possible struggles. As long as it remains, there will be no political struggle under the banner of the Congress. And without a mass political struggle, political power can never be captured. Curiously enough, while definitely disowning all desire ever to take up the struggle for the conquest of power, the Congress leaders are talking more and more about the Constituent Assembly. A revolutionary idea is being vulgarized. The Constituent Assembly, as conceived by the Congress leaders, is expected to be elected according to the laws of the State, which it is to replace by the new State it will constitute and make the fundamental law of the new State with the sanction of Imperialism.

All the apparently plausible insistence upon 'moral and social reform' can have no other object than to hide this fundamental revision of the political programme of the Congress. The revision is willful as well as a result of ineptitude on the part of the present leadership even to act consistently and courageously according to their own purpose of seeking a compromise with imperialism on the best possible terms.

The present situation is pitiable; the future is thoroughly uninspiring. If a bold initiative does not come from the political-minded minority, the Congress will be in the danger of disintegration. As a matter of fact, it is already in the midst of that danger. The leaders cannot be blind to it. Since they persistently refuse to do anything to rescue the Congress from the danger, one is compelled to come to the conclusion that the leaders themselves want the disintegration of the Congress as a mass organization. They want the imposing show to remain, to give them a semblance of power, which is to be employed only for striking the best possible bargain with Imperialism. But in reality, the organization will be degenerated into an election machinery, and a propaganda organ for the leaders. All political activities must cease, so that the Congress organization may be so transformed. The Congress is going to be a spinners' association under the moral dictatorship of a Mahatma. Will that calamity be permitted? Should politically conscious fighters for freedom submit themselves to a self-constituted dictatorship, while the Indian people's struggle for freedom is being not only bungled, but sabotaged, under a smokescreen of moral cant and bombastic phrases?

In order to have the honour of leading the struggle for Indian freedom, the Congress must have a new leadership. The struggle will be hard. But it is necessary. The complete political bankruptcy of the present leadership and their self-exposure in this crisis, should encourage that struggle because these latest events cannot be quietly passed over in the pretext of waiting for a better opportunity.

137. 'We are Under Cross-fire': Subhas Chandra Bose on Forward Bloc Resolution

Tribune, 7 December 1939.

7 December 1939

The view that the Forward Bloc is under cross-fire and that it will survive 'Governmental repression on the one hand and unmitigated vendetta of the Congress High Command on the other,' is expressed by Subhas Chandra Bose, in a signed article entitled 'Our Working Committee' in this week's issue of the 'Forward Bloc'.

Bose says: 'The All-India Working Committee of the Forward Bloc met at Calcutta on the 24 November and the following days. Representatives of other Leftist organizations like the All-India Kisan Sabha and the National Front Group attended on invitation and their presence and advice were exceedingly helpful. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, who is a host in himself, besides

being the General Secretary of the All-India Kisan Sabha, and who is a tower of strength to the Left Movement in India, was good enough to visit Calcutta twice within a fortnight, his second visit being on the occasion of the meeting of our All-India Working Committee. The Committee did a great deal of hard thinking and heart searching and passed sixteen resolutions on questions of varying importance. These resolutions have already appeared in the daily press, but they are also published in one lot in this issue.

‘The main resolution deals with the present situation in India. It examines in great detail the stand taken by the Congress Working Committee with regard to the major questions of War policy and India’s National Demand and adversely criticizes that Committee on some points. This resolution deserves the attention of the public. The central point in it is that the position and stand of the Congress Working Committee have not yet been clarified with the result that the people at large are left in considerable doubt. Some of the utterances and statements of members of that Committee as also of Mahatma Gandhi create an impression that they mean a fight. Others create a contrary impression as, for instance the remark of Mahatmaji to the effect that he will resist Civil Disobedience if started, and of Rajagopalachari, ex-Premier of Madras, to the effect that the Congress Ministers are on a three months’ holiday. Over and above these remarks news trickle in from time to time which tend to confirm the impression that the Congress Working Committee will not ultimately show fight. For instance it is reported from Bihar that the Advisers who are carrying on the administration since the recent ministerial resignations, have in some cases been ordering that files are to be put up before the Congress Ministers when they come back to office.

‘The Forward Bloc has made it clear more than once that in the event of the Congress Working Committee not giving the lead expected of it, it will endeavour to do so though the best thing would undoubtedly be for the official call to go forth in the name of the Congress. The point at issue now is as to what the Congress Working Committee will ultimately decide. There should be no room for complaint that it was prepared to give the call and that somebody else butted in. So far, the Congress Working Committee has been asking others to wait and to give it a chance to satisfy the public demand. But there should be a limit to our patience. Consequently, the sooner the Congress Working Committee comes to a decision, one way or the other, and announces it, the better for everybody concerned.

‘As in many other cases, double-faced propaganda is now being conducted against us by our political opponents. We are being condemned for threatening to act independently of the Congress Working Committee and of Mahatma Gandhi. We are at the same time being adversely criticized for not declaring war on the British Government. Members of the Congress Working Committee are reported to have openly challenged us in public meetings to go ahead and launch a struggle. Either attack leaves us unaffected, for we have to determine the course of action that would be most conducive to our national welfare, regardless of the smiles or frowns of our critics.

‘The declared attitude of the Forward Bloc should not be construed as a threat or a challenge to the Congress Working Committee for it is not so. That is why it has also been repeatedly stated that the most desirable thing would be for the Congress Working Committee to move forward and have an undivided Congress behind itself. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that our attitude has had and will have a steadying effect on the Congress Working Committee. Who can now tell what the Working Committee would have decided after the outbreak of war in September or whether the Congress Ministries would have resigned by now, but for the bold stand taken by the Leftists on the issues of War Policy and National Demand?

‘The resolution on the International situation is also important, since it defines clearly our attitude towards the recent world developments. Europe, outside Russia, Germany and Italy, is today being governed by British Foreign policy. Russia had consistently and tenaciously

endeavoured to secure an understanding with Great Britain and France and also with Poland. It was only after she was convinced of the utter hopelessness of this effort that she decided to enter into a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany. The statements on Foreign Policy made in recent months by M. Molotov on behalf of the Soviet Government are remarkable for their clarity and transparent lucidity and should serve as an example to all foreign ministers.

'The recent arrest of Pandit V.D. Tripathi, Secretary of the All-India Committee and President of the Provincial Committee of the Forward Bloc is extremely significant. It has brought into prominence before the public eye what we had already known before, viz. that the Forward Bloc is in full swing. To use a rather unhappy but very effective expression, Tripathiji is the uncrowned king of his own district of Unao in the UP. Besides his position in the Forward Bloc, he is the Chairman of the Unao Municipality, member of the UP Legislative Assembly, member of the Executive Council of the Provincial Congress Committee, of the All-India Congress Committee and of the War Council of the UP Provincial Congress Committee. The arrest of a leader of such outstanding position carries its own moral.

'The other resolutions passed by the AIWC of the Forward Bloc is about cross-fire. There is governmental repression on the one hand and unmitigated vendetta of the Congress High Command on the other. At the moment the latter is causing more harassment than the former. But we shall survive both.

'The resolution on the Bengal Political Prisoners was a timely one. It made it clear that the Forward Bloc stood by the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee in its pledge to the Political Prisoners. There is no room for apprehension that pledge will not be redeemed. Whether as a separate issue or as an integral part of larger All-India issues, the Bengal PCC will fight for the cause of the Political Prisoners and in this task it will have the whole-hearted sympathy and support of the Forward Bloc.

'The resolutions dealing with Muslims under different heads also deserve attention and perusal, particularly of Muslims themselves. They clearly illustrate our manner of approach to the Hindu-Muslim question. A special resolution on the Majlis-i-Ahrar was absolutely necessary, because the Ahrars have not unfortunately received as much attention so far as they should really deserve.

'In conclusion, let it be noted from now by all concerned that the next Independence Day on the 26 January, 1940 will have special significance. Our Working Committee has referred to this matter as well.'

138. 'New Independence Pledge will Result in Political Suicide of Congress': Mr M.N. Roy Exhorts Leftists to Oppose it

Leader, 29 December 1939.

Dehra Dun
27 December 1939

The emphasis on the constructive programme will result in the Congress ceasing to be a political body, suggests Mr M.N. Roy in a statement on the Working Committee's new Independence pledge.

He says: 'The Working Committee resolution on the Independence Day grants to Congressmen freedom of conscience. While welcoming this democratic gesture it must be said that the purpose of the Working Committee to ascertain their strength over the disposal of the amended pledge will not be served, unless freedom is extended to public for the expression of views and facilities are given to do so. A sufficiently long period of propaganda will be necessary to enable the great bulk

of Congressmen to give their verdict intelligently. Otherwise the new pledge will be mechanically taken at mass meetings, which demonstration will have no more democratic value than a Hitler plebiscite. If the Working Committee wishes to have an intelligent verdict, those opposed to the pledge should be given freedom and facility for propagating their views on the platform and in the press. That freedom is not there today. The new pledge should be withheld in the meantime. Propaganda for and against it will strengthen the Congress by imparting political education to the rank and file.

Supreme Necessity Eclipsed

'The latter part of the new pledge makes the working of the so-called constructive programme obligatory on all Congressmen. I cannot accept it. According to the Working Committee resolution, I shall submit my reasons in detail to the provincial committee. In the meanwhile, I wish to declare publicly that if a sufficiently large number of Congressmen take the new pledge and sincerely act accordingly the Congress will cease to be a political organization. The belief that the introduction of the charkha in every home, and the general use of khaddar and products of village industries will remove the grinding poverty of the masses, implies disbelief in the supreme necessity of political freedom. Therefore the exaggerated emphasis on the so-called constructive programme contradicts the declaration contained in the first paragraph of the pledge. By promoting belief in the so-called constructive programme Congressmen will prevent the growth of the will to political freedom on the part of the masses.

Crucial Test

'I hope all Congressmen who are primarily concerned with the political freedom of our country will realize that they cannot conscientiously take the new pledge. It is crucial test for all Leftists. They should not only express their own disapproval but explain the implication of the new pledge to the rank and file and help the latter to take advantage of the freedom granted by the Working Committee.'

139. On Independence Day Pledge: V.B. Karnik to M.N. Roy, 28 December 1939

M.N. Roy Papers, Subject File No. 3, Part 1, NMML.

28 December 1939

... The idea of expressing our disapproval of the Independence Day pledge and trying to secure signatures of a large number of Congress members is very widely appreciated here and by Maharashtra comrades. As suggested by you I have addressed today letters to CP, CSP, FB and Kisan Sabha leaders. Copy of the letter sent herewith. But we cannot wait till we hear from them. We should start on our own and instruct our comrades to secure if possible the co-operation of the local units of those organizations. Khare writes saying that the CP and CSP in Poona are prepared to work with us in this behalf. He suggests and I agree with him that in order to secure a larger measure of support we should concentrate on an active programme and charkha and khadi. If we include in it our disapproval of the peaceful and legitimate means and the doctrine of non-violence, there would be very little support as a large number of Congressmen would for legal and other reasons refuse to sign such a statement. The disapproval of that part of the pledge may be left to our comrades to be expressed by them individually or collectively. But the general campaign amongst Congress members should be restricted only to the disapproval of the constructive

programme. I request you to prepare a short statement in that behalf. As soon as I get it I shall send it to our comrades and the campaign will start. It will help us materially in our election propaganda as well.

140. A Manifesto: To the Members of the Indian National Congress

Independent India, 31 December 1939.

31 December 1939

Fellow-Fighters for Freedom:

Once again, the moment is coming for you to exercise the democratic right of determining the policy of the great organization to which we all belong. In a few weeks, you will elect the delegates to the coming Annual Session of the Congress. This year, the Congress shall have to make a momentous decision which will make or mar the future of our struggle for freedom. Before you elect the delegates to the Congress, you must form your opinion regarding the policy of the Congress in the present juncture. It is your right to elect as delegates only such people who would agree to voice your opinion, and try that the Congress policy is shaped accordingly.

Of late, the present leaders of the Congress have been pursuing a policy which is causing widespread dissatisfaction throughout the organization. But the discontent is not frankly and courageously expressed. False notions of loyalty to the leaders and of discipline stand in the way. If we are not satisfied with what the leaders are doing, it is not only our right, but duty, indeed a moral responsibility, to express our disagreement. But only expression of opinion does not help much. There should be some way of having the Congress policy revised according to the opinion of the rank and file. The opportunity to do so is afforded by the election of delegates to the Annual Session of the Congress.

Before we can express our opinion intelligently, it is necessary that we understand the situation. Unfortunately the rank and file, are not helped to do so; they are simply asked to obey—to sanction whatever is decided by the leaders. Since the war broke out in Europe, the Working Committee of the Congress has made several resolutions which have committed the Congress to a policy not quite in accord with its declared political goal. The leaders may be honestly convinced that that is the wisest course to take. But the entire membership of the Congress have the right to give their verdict which is the final authority. Therefore the resolutions of the Working Committee should be critically examined by all Congressmen throughout the country, so that their carefully considered opinion may be expressed by the delegates in the coming Annual Session.

The outstanding feature of the present policy is complete inactivity. It has been authoritatively declared by our leaders that there will be no struggle until and unless certain conditions are created. Every Congressman must be non-violent in thought, word and deed. There must be communal unity. Finally, it has been declared that the tangible standard for the preparation of struggle is regular spinning by every Congressman, anxious to participate in it. Moreover, there are the other items of the so-called constructive programme. Being eager to participate in a decisive struggle for freedom, all Congressmen throughout the country should willingly prepare themselves for the purpose. But it is also their legitimate right to enquire if the practices prescribed will serve the purpose. The main question is, what is the object of the struggle? The average Congressman can have no doubt about that. The object of the struggle is to attain national freedom. The object obviously is political. Therefore our struggle must be a political struggle. How will spinning and other activities prescribed by the co-called constructive programme prepare the country for a political struggle? That is the question before every single Congressman today, and we have the right to demand a clear answer from our leaders.

Every intelligent Congressman knows in his heart of hearts that neither the spinning nor any other activity according to the constructive programme will take us nearer to political freedom. Nevertheless, there is no protest against the present policy of inaction. It is said that, there being no other programme, let us obey the leaders. It is forgotten that, if the leaders fail to formulate the appropriate programme of action, the membership must take the initiative and suggest it. That will be neither disloyalty nor indiscipline. That will be only discharging our responsibility as members of the political organization, and demonstrating our devotion to the cause of political freedom.

The present policy of the Congress is determined by the fact that our leaders believe in the possibility of India becoming free with the consent of British Imperialism. This belief has been repeatedly expressed in the recent resolutions of the Working Committee and declarations by individuals Congress leaders. Instead of mobilizing the masses in the final struggle for capturing political power, our leaders have been asking British Imperialism to declare India a free nation. With this wrong idea about the way to freedom, they have naturally brushed aside the goal of complete independence, and have declared their readiness to come to an agreement with British Imperialism if the latter will grant Dominion Status. An equally wrong interpretation is given to the demand for the Constituent Assembly. It is hoped that the demand will be accepted by Imperialism. The British Government is requested to allow the Indian people to elect a Constituent Assembly for framing the Constitution of the Government of India. It is very easy to understand why the British Government can never allow the Indian people to frame such a Constitution as it will imply separation of India from the British Empire. Yet, complete national independence—to which every Congressman is pledged—does not mean anything less than that.

More than one authoritative Congress leaders, even Gandhi himself, have declared that there is no difference between complete independence and Dominion Status within the British Empire. If that view is taken, then the object of the Congress must be changed. It is wrong to believe that any status within the British Empire can be equal to complete independence.

The policy and method of a struggle are necessarily determined by its object. Those Congressmen who are not satisfied with the present policy, and do not believe in the efficacy of the current methods, must see that the object of the Congress is not imperceptibly changed. Unfortunately exactly that is being done now. Therefore the task of the coming session of the Congress will be to reaffirm its political goal and adopt a plan of action for preparing the country to attain that goal as soon as possible. Only such people should be elected delegates who would undertake to voice this demand and see that the resolutions of the Congress are framed accordingly.

In order to check the dangerous tendencies developing in the higher circles of the Congress, and to guarantee against any deviation from the path of an unrelenting struggle for freedom, in its coming session, the Congress must be committed to the following policy:

1. Attainment of the goal of complete independence as defined by the Faizpur Resolution, through the conquest of power by the people.
2. No specification of the means and methods to be adopted in the struggle for freedom, because that necessarily restricts the scope of the struggle.
3. Enforcement of the demand for a Constituent Assembly through the revolutionary action of the masses.
4. Building up of the Primary Congress Committees as the local organs of that struggle as well as the units of the National Democratic State which will replace the present Imperialist State.
5. Mobilization of the masses by the local Congress Committees leading them in a continuous struggle for enforcing their partial economic and political demand.

6. Establishment of national unity through the standing co-operation in the day-to-day activities of the local units of the Congress, the Muslim League and other organizations definitely committed to the goal of complete national independence.
7. The daily activity of Congressmen and Congress Committees to consist of propagandist, agitational and organizational works of purely political character, that is, of such a nature as will quicken the political consciousness of the people, and strengthen the Congress as a revolutionary political party mobilizing and leading the masses for the conquest of effective political power.

We appeal to all Congressmen who are primarily concerned with the question of political freedom, to realize the danger of the present Congress policy, and have the courage to come forward with an alternative policy as suggested above. With this policy, it will be possible to free the Congress from all its weaknesses and prepare the country to take up the final struggle for freedom so as to avail of the opportunity presented by the complications of the international situation. In order to have the Congress to adopt the alternative policy it is necessary to elect delegates pledged to press for its adoption. If all Congressmen realize their grave responsibility, and boldly exercise their democratic right, the majority of delegates in the coming session of the Congress will be representatives of their views. In that case, the coming session of the Congress will be really a momentous one, because it will mark the beginning of a new stage in our struggle for freedom.

The function of the leadership of an organization is to give a concrete expression to the will of the rank and file. Let this will be clearly felt in the coming Session of the Congress. The struggle for freedom is a revolutionary struggle. It must be conducted with a revolutionary determination and revolutionary means. If the present leaders of the Congress refuse to do so, they must make room for others. Earnest fighters for freedom should have no hesitation if they have been asked to choose between right lead to their goal and a wrong way indicated by mistaken leaders. Today, the Congress men are called upon to make that choice. If any consideration persuades them not to act according to their own instinctive urge, they will betray the masses who look upon them as their leaders.

International complications are creating a situation which guarantees success in our struggle for freedom, if only we can grasp the implications of the struggle, realize the possibilities of the given situation, and have the courage and determination to make the necessary preparations to strike the final blow in the earliest available opportunity.

To do that, the Congress must have a clear policy. It must stand unwaveringly by its political object. It must not be influenced by any other consideration. And it must have a revolutionary leadership. Let the coming session of the Congress invest it with all the necessary equipments, and complete independence will no longer remain a distant goal, nor will it be degraded to Dominion Status within the British Empire.

Chapter 8. Communal (and Sectarian) Politics

I. MUSLIMS

1. On Minority Grievances

Editorial, *Behar Herald*, 3 January 1939.

3 January 1939

The 26th session of the All India Muslim League met in Patna during the Christmas week and speaker after speaker expounded in forceful language the grievances, fancied or real, of the Muslim community. The Muslims are a powerful minority in the country, they are homogeneous and well organized, they have able spokesmen to represent their cause and the community need have no fear of its case going by default. But the other minority communities in the various provinces are much worse off. If they do not organize and present a united front to an unsympathetic administration they would slowly but surely be squeezed out. There is reason for dismay in Sir Sikander Hyat Khan's statement that the minorities were wrong if they believed that Governors could exercise their special powers to protect them.... The Punjab Premier further said they were formerly led to believe that communal quarrels were the doings of British imperialism, but it was patent to everyone that communal relations were never so strained as they were today.

If there is to be peace and concord in the land, these accusations and grievances of the minorities will have to be looked into by those in power today. It is not possible to ignore these on the ground that they are frivolous and baseless....

The mentality of Congress leaders today is not what it was in 1931. Had it not been so, Aziz Mirza would not have been justified in saying that the demand for independence by the Congress was nothing more than a cloak for gaining political domination to the exclusion and detriment of the minority communities. It would be unfair to accuse Congress of harbouring such an aim before it came to power. But it is unfortunately true that since the assumption of office, the various Congress administrations have proceeded in a way and have adopted such means and methods as have greatly disillusioned quite a large number of those who were sincere believers in the ideals of nationalism preached by the Congress for years.



2. On the Muslim League Session

Hindustan Times, 6 January 1939.

6 January 1939

[Extract]

The session of the Muslim League and the meetings of the Muslim Students' Conference and of the Shias at Patna, and the spate of speeches, all breathing distrust and abuse of the Congress and the Hindus, have left a trail of bitterness behind before which the passing of the old year and the emergence of the new year... has sunk into insignificance. These utterances of a mischievous type have worked up a dangerous mentality among a section of the Muslims whose interest it is to kick up a row. The wounded vanity of Jinnah would stop short of nothing and a section of his community would be only too willing to lend him a helping hand. But what is surprising is that other Muslim publicists should also become tools in the hands of Jinnah and his henchmen....

Take for instance the case of the agitation in the Hyderabad State. Even assuming without admitting that the Congress has a hand in the political ferment in Hyderabad, how can it be said that the Congress has the design to establish Hindu Raj when one remembers the too obvious facts that such an agitation is going on in a number of Hindu States where leading Congressites are taking part in it? The only intelligible inference from all these agitations which will be drawn by any fair-minded person is that the Congress stands for a principle which it applies to all, irrespective of communal or religious considerations. The Leaguers have held out the threat to the Kashmir State as if the Muslim agitators have not had a long innings there.

Similarly, much capital was made out of the so-called 'atrocities' which the Local Government is said to have committed in regard to cow-sacrifice when a breach of the peace becomes imminent. The Muslims complain of proceedings under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. This Section has been as freely directed against the Muslims as against the Hindus where a breach of the peace has been apprehended... The Muslims will not learn to respect the sentiments of their Hindu neighbours in their insistence on the exercise of their rights, although they will expect the Hindus to respect the sentiments of the Muslims at the risk of their own rights....

The sum total of the impression one brought back from the proceedings of the Patna session of the Muslim League is that Jinnah is paying the Congress great compliment by trying to imitate it, though hardly with any success, so far as programme and principles are concerned; that he is out to secure for himself the role of Gandhi or Kemal Pasha¹ in Muslim India; that with this end in view he has let loose a tornado of abuse of the Congress and the Hindus in order to play upon the prejudices and ignorance of the Muslim masses for whose allegiance he is making a bid; that everything coming from the Congress and the Hindus must be opposed; that the Muslims, howsoever in minority, must be treated as equal, even artificially, in administrative spheres, so that in provinces where they are in a minority they should have the same influence and voice as the Hindus, and that at the Centre, in a scheme of federation, the Muslims should have the same representation and influence as the Hindus. That is why the game of bullying has been started in right earnest against Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress and the Congress leaders and the Hindus; and this will not stop unless they yield to curses and threats from the League platform....

¹ Mustafa Kemal (1881–1938); later Kemal Pasha; leading Turkish General, modernizer and statesman; President of the Turkish Republic (1923–38).



3. The Muslim League Session at Patna: Harry Haig to Linlithgow, 10 January 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

[Extract]

The other Christmas conference, the effects of which are likely to be very marked in this Province, was that of the All India Muslim League at Patna. I need not comment on that at length, but I think it is bound to lead to an accentuation of what I have already described as aggressive leadership of the Muslims in this Province. The development is entirely in accordance with my anticipations. Unless the Congress are prepared to come to terms with the Muslim League, I think the communal situation is bound to deteriorate steadily. The Muslims, I should judge, are losing patience and losing temper. They are not prepared indefinitely to remain a minority without influence on the policy of the Government. On the other hand I see no signs at present of the Congress being prepared to make terms and in effect enter into an alliance with the Muslim League. Pant, when he took office, was I believe very definitely in favour of this line, but the policy in this matter is an all-India one and Jawaharlal Nehru threw his weight decisively against it. I doubt very much whether he has changed his views. Actually during the last few months the communal situation in the Province has been reasonably quiet, but we are now coming on to the difficult festivals, the Bakr-Id and the Muharram, and I think we shall be fortunate if we finish the cold weather without serious trouble somewhere, and perhaps in several places.

4. Sir Mohd. Yakub on Congress: Draft Resolution

Tribune, 12 January 1939.

Bombay

11 January 1939

The view that 'the Mussalmans of India can never accept any declaration of rights or any charter of safeguards, however just and generous it may be, which gives them no hand in its formation and which reduces them to the status of a minority community,' is expressed by Sir Mohd. Yakub¹ in the course of a statement to the Associated Press on 'the latest move of Mr Gandhi to place before the Congress High Command, for their acceptance, a scheme for the protection of the rights of the minorities in India in which he includes the Mussalmans as well.' Mr Mohd. Yakub characterizes this move as 'a clear indication of the Fascist creed being followed by the Congress.'

He continues: 'While Mr Gandhi and the other Congress leaders have always insisted upon the right of the Indians to frame their own constitution, Mr Gandhi denies totally this right to the minorities in India in as much as he wants to prepare his scheme without giving the minorities a hand in its preparation.'

'The British Government's attitude was much more fair and constitutional when they employed no less than three agencies, namely the Simon Commission, the Round Table Conference and the Joint Parliamentary Committee to discuss the new constitution with the representatives of India, including Mr Gandhi himself.'

'Mr Gandhi is violating all the principles and theories of constitutional law and the historical truth when he includes the Mussalmans of India amongst the minority communities. The Muslim population in India is no doubt smaller than those of the Hindus, including the non-caste Indians, if they can be included among the Hindus. But this does not mean that the Mussalmans of India can be classed as a minority community. The Mussalmans cannot be divided according to their

country of domicile, they are a single indivisible nation living in different parts of the world. The Mussalmans of India do not belong to the same community as the other Indians: they belong to an altogether different nation and as such are entitled to be classed as a different nation and not a community, having their own rights of self-determination. The Mussalmans of India can never accept any declaration of rights or any charter of safeguards, however just and generous it may be, which gives them no hand in its formation and which reduces them to the status of a minority community.

'I do not favour the policy of making the gulf between the Hindus and the Mussalmans an impassable one nor do I approve of the construction of watertight compartments of the two great people, who are destined to live on the same soil and to share the fortunes and misfortunes and joys and sorrows of one another. On the other hand I would strongly urge upon my co-religionists the supreme need of adopting an attitude of reconciliation and rapprochement. But I do not think that reconciliation and honourable settlement can profitably be substituted by surrender and appeasement.'

¹ Maulvi Mohammad Yakub (1879–1942); graduate of the MAO College, Aligarh; closely associated with the Muslim League; its president in 1927; member (1923, 1926, 1934) of UP Legislative Assembly and its president (July 1930); knighted in 1929.

5. On the Muslim League Meeting: Linlithgow to Hallett, 15 January 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2187, NAI.

[Extract]

Many thanks for your secret letter of the 6th January, which has just reached me. I greatly appreciate your comment on the meeting of the Muslim League both in general and in its effect in Bihar. I think one has to make a fairly considerable allowance for the anxiety of the Muslims to keep themselves well in the forefront and to avoid any suggestion that they are not able to shout quite as loud as the competing parties. For all that, I was myself a good deal disturbed to think that so many people who have held, or are holding high office should on a public occasion of this nature give expression to sentiments such as those which marked this meeting. I quite realize that the Muslim League, like the Congress, must play politics up to a point. But I hoped that some greater sense of responsibility would have been shown and a somewhat greater appreciation of the possible misunderstandings in the mind of students and other impressionable and immature people, to which certain of the remarks which were made might give rise. Sikander, as you know, came to Calcutta from Patna and asked to come to see Laithwaite. I took advantage of this to see him informally myself a few minutes, but without giving any publicity to the fact that I had done so. I tackled him quite straight on the question of the Patna speeches.

His reaction was precisely what I had expected, in other words, that the Muslims felt that from the point of view of their own position and of the public, they had to come out on this occasion in very definite colours. He took credit to himself for having done a certain amount to damp excitement down and to secure that the wording of certain resolutions was less objectionable than it might otherwise have been. His own general attitude however appeared to be substantially the same as it always had been, and indeed he did not for a moment suggest that he had in any way changed his views or his position.

Mr Abdul Aziz's contributions seem to me in many ways, for the reasons you give in your letter and having regard, to the fact that he has himself held office as a Minister under the old constitution, as embarrassing from the local point of view as any. I do not take too seriously the general charges made of discrimination by Congress Ministries against Muslims. I think that here too the Conference was talking to the public and without too close regard for facts; and I welcome your own judgment that both in Bihar and in your experience of the United Provinces, orders passed by the Governments concerned cannot be regarded as having been really detrimental to Muslim interests. I shall be much interested to hear Craik's comments (I had already written to him myself some days ago), and I have no doubt that Sikander will have been as frank with him as he was with me.

I do not think that Pakistan proposition can be easily put aside as Congress would like to suggest. It seems to me a thoroughly unsound one, but that is neither here nor there. I suspect that we are likely to hear a great deal more of it; and it is no doubt inevitable that a minority so important as the Muslim minority and so apprehensive that any decline in the degree of our direct control in this country can only be to their disadvantage, should think that the course of wisdom is to develop their own organization, and to endeavour to emulate the control which the Congress have been able to establish, and maintain so far as the Congress-provinces and the Hindu electorate are concerned. The possibilities of an increase in communal tension which that type of situation holds out are too obvious to call for any comment. But I see nothing for it at this stage but to watch developments....

6. CP Muslim League and Vidya Mandir Scheme

Editorial, *Hitavada*, 15 January 1939.

15 January 1939

The CP Muslim League is again threatening to precipitate matters. The talk of satyagraha is in the air. The CP Government's decision to open 126 Vidya Mandirs on the 26th January has suddenly set the wheels of the Muslim League in motion once more. The League looks upon this decision of the Government as a breach of the understanding arrived at between the provincial government and the Nawabzada, that a meeting of Muslim MLAs in the province would be convened to discuss the whole question of Muslim education including the Vidya Mandir Scheme. The League, therefore, had suspended its contemplated satyagraha. The CP Government's decision follows quickly upon its reported agreement with the Muslim League Secretary. If the report about the agreement is true, the CP Government's action is undoubtedly tactless. Having come to an understanding, they ought to have honoured it both in letter as well as in spirit. But if they had already made up their minds about the inauguration of the Vidya Mandirs on 26 January, it was highly improper on their part to come to an understanding with the Muslim League. We are proceeding on the assumption that the report about the agreement is substantially true. If the report is not true, it is imperative that the provincial government should clarify its position immediately. The government must realize that while dealing with communal organizations, it is essential to act with unusual care and straightforwardness. To act in a manner which is likely to be interpreted as double-dealing is to play into the hands of communalists who are ever-ready to make a mountain of a molehill. Communalism like all other reactionary movements breeds on the fertile ground of imaginary wrongs and artificially manufactured 'atrocities'. Such is the state of affairs in India today that a seemingly innocent act can be easily transformed into a mighty outrage, if there is a remote chance of somebody representing that act as an attack on religion or

community. In this situation, we are constrained to say that the CP government has not displayed the necessary tact and circumspection in dealing with the local Muslim League. In the first place, their naming the educational scheme as Vidya Mandir scheme was singularly unfortunate. They have further shown indiscretion in sticking to that name with totally unnecessary persistency. They would have lost nothing by quickly changing the name Vidya Mandir into something more palatable to the Muslim feelings. By doing this, they would have easily taken the wind out of the sails of the entire anti-Vidya Mandir agitation. It is now a matter of common knowledge that it is this unfortunate name that has been utilized by the communalists as the main basis of their manufactured agitation....

7. Punjab Premier and Congress

Editorial, *Tribune*, 22 January 1939.

22 January 1939

The intervention of other and more urgent, though by no means more important, matters has alone stood in the way of our noticing earlier a very significant declaration made by Sir Sikander Hyat Khan in his speech on the adjournment motion moved by a Congress member on Monday last. 'I appeal to you,' he said, addressing the Congress benches, 'to join us in maintaining the dignity of democracy in the name of the great organization, the Indian National Congress, whose reputation is not confined to India but which is respected by other countries also.' At a time when so many Muslim League leaders, including, Mr Jinnah himself, have been vying with one another in showering unmeasured condemnation upon the Congress and all who stand for it, it does one's heart good to find this very influential leader of the League bear such eloquent testimony to the reputation which the Congress enjoys both at home and abroad for strict adherence to the principles and practices of democracy. But 'What followed was even more important and more unmistakably significant. "My desire", said the Premier, "is that the Congress should live. I wish the Congress to live because I believe that acting on the principles of this organization we can achieve victory and I say that the principles of my party are the same as those of the Congress".'

Although he did not say so explicitly, Sir Sikander could only have meant by the words, 'my party,' the Unionist party of which he has been the supreme leader ever since the death of Sir Fazl-i-Husain, and not the Muslim League against which he carried on a relentless war at the last election on the ground that its principles were fundamentally different from those of his party, and on which he succeeded in inflicting a crushing defeat. It would, indeed, be absurd for anyone to claim that the principles of the Muslim League, which has never been anything else than a purely communal organization and whose activities have always been preponderatingly, if not solely, inspired by communal motives and directed to communal motives and directed to communal ends are identical with those of the Congress, which, ever since its birth, has shunned communalism as deadly poison and to which nationalism is the very breath of its nostrils. In this respect the Unionist Party stands on a somewhat different footing. Reactionary in its political outlook and sympathies and communal in its essential character as it undoubtedly is, it has at least outwardly been a non-communal organization and has professedly stood for freedom and progress; and while its membership has always been predominantly Muslim it has always had a sprinkling of non-Muslim members. It was on the score of its avowed freedom from communalism that it refused to make common cause with, and actually and strenuously fought the League at the last election. In the opinion of its own accredited leader, therefore, it may well claim to have the same principles as the Congress, whatever others, and especially dispassionate observers, may think of

its pretensions. What does concern us in the present case, however, is not the reasonableness or unreasonableness of Sir Sikander Hyat's claim, but his frank admission that by acting on the principles of the Congress 'we can achieve victory.' If that is his view, he owes it as much to himself as to his province and country to say why he has neither joined the Congress himself nor advised his political associates and followers to join it. Why, in fact, he has gone to the other extreme and joined the Muslim League, whose principles are diametrically opposed to those of the Congress and only a short while ago were declared by himself to be equally opposed to the principles of his own party? The answer that Sir Sikander gave to this question in his speech cannot stand even a moment's scrutiny. 'I may tell you,' he said, 'that I do not join the Congress in the Punjab because the Congress in the Punjab is dead. If you do not improve, and if you continue to act as you are doing now, the Congress may not be able to survive here at all.' These words, taken with those we have already noticed, can only mean that Sir Sikander's sole quarrel is with the manner in which the leaders of the Congress have been conducting themselves and carrying on their activities in the Punjab. Now, in the first place, while this may explain his unwillingness to join the Congress, it does not by any means explain his joining the Muslim League, which is the very antithesis of the Congress in its attitude towards those principles which Sir Sikander declares to be common ground between the Congress and his own party. Secondly, the statement betrays either a singular confusion of thought or a strange ignorance of the essential constitution and character of the great organization to which he paid so deservedly eulogistic a tribute. If the principles of the Congress are all that they should be and its constitution and character are exactly what Sir Sikander would like them to be, and if his only complaint is as regards the present leaders of the Congress in the Punjab and the manner in which they have been carrying on that organization, does it not occur to him that the remedy lies in his own hands, that, in fact, it is his own remissness and that of others sharing his views that is solely responsible for the conditions of which, he complains?

Sir Sikander and his party claim to be the representatives of the majority of the people of this province. If that claim is well founded, nothing surely can be easier than for them to constitute the majority party also in the Congress which is an essentially democratic body and to capture its machinery. They have only to join it in large numbers, in numbers proportionate to the majority they claim, in order to do so. The feasibility of this method has been demonstrated in the Frontier Province where a party predominantly Muslim in its composition holds the reins of power both in the Congress and the administration. Why does not Sir Sikander Hyat Khan take a leaf out of the book of Dr Khan Sahib? For our part we are firmly convinced that if Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, instead of taking the fatal step he did when he joined the Muslim League, had joined the Congress with the bulk of his followers both in the electorate and in the province generally, not only would he have still retained his supreme place in the administration, but the victory of the Congress in the battle for constitutional independence, which he seems ardently to desire, would have been brought perceptibly nearer. It is because he did not take this only right course that he has been led on to commit one blunder after another and the gulf between him and the Congress is immeasurably wider today than at the commencement of his regime. Even now it is not too late for him to retrace the false step taken by him. Let him take courage in both hands, sever his connection with the League, in which his position is none too happy or enviable, and join the Congress, the only political organization in the country in which the principles and aims in which he professedly believes can find their self-fulfilment. That is the only way in which he can achieve 'victory' for himself, for his province and country. The way he has been proceeding can only lead to disaster. Almost all the major hopes with which he started his career as Premier already lie shattered. Communal unity, which he placed in the very forefront of his programme, is farther off today

than at any time in the past. The minority communities whose confidence he aspired and was so anxious to win have been effectively alienated. The economic measures by which he hoped to improve the lot of the poor cultivators have in actual fact led only to class and communal warfare. If there is statesmanship in the Unionist Party, now is the time for it to assert itself. Let it call an immediate halt to this suicidal policy and make a fresh start along the only road that can lead to victory.

8. Hindu–Muslim Compromise: Viceroy to Secretary of State, 23 January 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

Note of an interview between the Aga Khan and Private Secretary to Viceroy on 21 January 1939.

Hindu–Muslim Relations

Mr Gandhi said His Highness was willing to go very far in the direction of a compromise but would never agree to accept the Muslim League as the only possible Muslim body. He had discussed the matter fully with the Mahatma and now proposed to write to various of his personal friends—Sir Sultan Ahmed¹, Sir Firoz Khan Noon², the Nawab of Chhatari, Sir Nazimuddin³ and two or three others and let them know that concessions Mr Gandhi was prepared to make in return for arrangements with the League. These concessions were substantially as follows:

- (i) Population proportion or else weightage in minority provinces for service appointments in all branches of the services. A corresponding arrangement to be made in respect of provinces in which Hindus were in a minority.
- (ii) A Committee to be set up consisting of equal number of Hindu and Muslim philologists to prepare a dictionary of Hindustani and to meet the difficulties which had arisen over the Hindi-Urdu question. If the Muslims appeared to attach importance to the retention of Urdu he (Mr Gandhi) would be ready to agree to the amount spent in the case of Muslims on education in Hindu majority provinces to be handed over to a Muslim Committee to be used by a Muslim body entirely outside the Ministry of Education, on the understanding that a similar arrangement would be introduced in respect of Hindus in provinces in which they were in a minority.
- (iii) Separate Electorates and the Communal Award to stand. His Highness added that his friends would put these propositions before Mr Jinnah. His Highness himself had no desire to appear in the open in connection with them and was perfectly content to leave the glory of a settlement to Mr Jinnah, if he was prepared to agree to it. If, however, the Muslim League as a party were not prepared to compromise and continued to press for a qualitative description of the League and of Congress as Hindu and Muslim representative bodies, respectively, the only alternative he could see was a pact between the Congress and the Muslim League which would contain no definition of what precisely 'Congress' and 'Muslim League' were. But if Mr Jinnah and his friends were entirely unbending he must reserve his own complete liberty of action. He could not give any indication what course in fact he might be likely to take in a year's time, for that must depend on the circumstances. But subject to developments within that period (which he regarded as an appropriate length of time for consideration), he could not exclude the possibility of his having to appeal over the head of the League to the masses.

His Highness said that the conversation with Mr Gandhi then turned on to the position of the Princes and the outlook for them. His Highness recognized that he had no *locus standi* in that matter and the conversation was entirely personal and man to man. Mr Gandhi had explained that he was in no sense hostile to the Princes, that he was himself a monarchist even in the case of British India, though said the Aga Khan, he added the qualification that—the monarch should be chosen by the people. He described him as being very bitter about Jaipur and as having said that the Princes fell into two categories: (a) National Rulers; and (b) Foreign Rulers. By ‘Foreign Rulers’ he meant States such as Hyderabad and Kashmir. Category (b) had, he recognized, everything to fear. The first category had, in his judgment, nothing to fear. The right position for them to aim at was that of constitutional monarchs such as the Emperor of Japan or the King of England. It was not a question of making them pensioners in their own States....

The Ruler could, in any event, exercise all the influence he wanted to if he cared to do so. Mr Gandhi recognized at the same time that States in category (b) would have a difficult job before them. He instanced as examples of category (a) the Princes of Rajputana. On this His Highness commented that though he had not said so to Mr Gandhi, he had reasons to believe that the Rajputana Princes had made up their minds to fight and not to make any concession. They took the view that they had beaten the Muslims and that they were not going to bow down to any political pressure from outside.

Federation

Mr Gandhi had expressed the view that it would be impossible for him to accept mere nominees of the States. To do so would be too big a blow to the whole fundamental principle, and the contrast between the type of representative produced by British India and the type of representative who would come from the States would be too sharp.

¹ Sir Sultan Ahmed (1880–1963); educated at Gaya and Patna, then he left for England in 1902 where he was called to the Bar in 1905; started practice in the Calcutta High Court, and he shifted to Patna High Court in 1916; appointed a judge of the Patna High Court in 1919–20; first Indian Vice-Chancellor of Patna University (1923–30); attended the first and the second Round Table Conferences held in London in 1931–32 to solve the communal and constitutional problems of India; member of the Governor’s Executive Council (1923) and acting-commerce and railway member of the Governor-General’s Executive Council (1937); first Advocate-General by the Government of Bihar; attended the League of Nations as India’s delegate in 1938; a judge of the International Court of Justice at the Hague; appointed the Law Member of the Government of India in 1941.

² Malik Firoz Khan Noon (1893–1970); educated at Aitchison College, Lahore, Wadhom College, Oxford, and Inner Temple; barrister, Lahore High Court, 1911–26; member, Punjab Legislative Council, (1920–36); Minister, Punjab Government, 1921–30 and 1931–36; knighted in 1933; High Commissioner for India in the United Kingdom (1936–41); member, Viceroy’s Council, 1941–45; Indian representative in the British War Cabinet, 1944–45; published his diaries of Muslim massacre in Bihar in the *Daily Mail*, London, 1947; Jinnah’s special representative in the Middle East, 1941; member, Punjab Legislative Council and Pakistan Constituent Assembly, (1941–50); Governor, East Pakistan, 1950–3; elected to the Punjab (Pakistan) Legislature in 1953 and to the second Pakistan Constituent Assembly in June 1955; Chief Minister of Punjab (Pakistan), 1953–55; Foreign Minister of Pakistan, 1956–57; leader of Republican Party, 1958.

³ Khwaja Nazimuddin (1894–1964); grandson of Nawab of Dacca; educated at the Muslim University, Aligarh, and Trinity Hall, Cambridge; Chairman, Dacca Town Council (1922–29); Education Minister, Bengal (1929–37); Home Minister, 1937–41; leader, Muslim League Opposition Party in Bengal Legislative Council (1941–43); Chief Minister, Bengal (1943–46); delegate to the final session of the League of Nations, Geneva, 1946; went to United States as member of the Indian Food Mission, 1946; knighted in 1934; Chief Minister of East Pakistan, 14 August 1947–11 September 1948; Governor-General of Pakistan, 11 September 1948–16 October 1951; Prime Minister of Pakistan, 16 October 1951–17 April 1953 when he was dismissed by Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad in the midst of anti-Ahmadiya disturbances in the Punjab.



9. On the Muslim League Conference¹ at Patna: Harry Haig to
Linlithgow, 24 January 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

[Extract]

Another direction besides the Ayodhya Conference in which perhaps I have over-estimated the importance of speeches and resolutions is the All India Muslim League Conference at Patna. During my tour in the eastern districts I questioned a number of district officers and superintendents of police as to whether this conference had had any effect on the communal situation. They all told me it had not, and in this part of the Province at any rate they do not seem apprehensive about trouble at the Bakr Id. There is a particular local problem in the Gorakhpur district, at Zahidabad, which has been a centre of difficulty for a long time. I heard a great deal about it while I was at Gorakhpur, but on both sides there was an evident hope that through the good office of the Collector, who has the confidence of both communities, they would be able to reach some compromise. It did not seem to me that there was any trace of a dangerously aggressive attitude either on the part of the Hindus or the Muslims. I had an interesting talk at Gorakhpur with a young Muslim MLA who has been playing a very prominent part in the legislature. He said to me quite frankly that what the Muslim League wanted was to have their representatives on the Government. This has always been my view, and consequently I do not think that attempts by Gandhi to reassure the Muslims against unjust treatment in the everyday administration will have any effect. During the last few days the Hindus have been showing a decidedly aggressive spirit in connection with Hyderabad Day, and here in Allahabad I am told that owing to the Hindu attitude communal feeling has become much worse.

¹ Commenting on the Muslim League proceedings, the Viceroy wrote to Haig on 3 February 1939: 'I was greatly interested in what you tell me of reactions in the eastern districts to the proceedings at the Patna meeting of the Muslim League. I have had a good deal of correspondence on this subject with Hallett and also with Craik. I think, as I may have mentioned before, that one has got to make every allowance for the anxiety of Muslims to keep themselves in the foreground and to show that they are quite as well able to manufacture and use nationalist slogans as Congress; but I have been definitely rather uneasy at the possible effect of certain of the more extreme statements made at Patna on students and the like. I have some reason to think, too, that certain of the Princes have found these references to ultimate independence, etc. unsettling, and there is, of course, singularly little that we can effectively do to counter the impression which such declarations create. I am glad to think that so far as the communal situation is concerned, there should have been no material reactions in the United Provinces.'

10. Nagpur Muslims and the Vidya Mandir Scheme:
Muslims Launch Satyagraha

Hindustan Times, 27 January 1939.

Nagpur
26 January 1939

In pursuance of the decision taken at a mass meeting of the Nagpur Muslims last night to launch civil resistance as a protest against the inauguration of the Vidya Mandir Scheme today, Khan Bahadur Nawab Siddiqui Ali Khan, MLA, (Central), accompanied by nine Muslim volunteers, started in a procession towards the Government Secretariat to offer satyagraha and to prevent the Secretariat staff and clerks from joining their duties this morning. The police took elaborate precautions and all approaches and gates leading to the Secretariat building were guarded by the police.

The police stopped the batch outside the main gate of the Secretariat and a last minute effort was made by the District Magistrate and the District Superintendent of Police to persuade the batch to at least suspend the agitation till the meeting of the Muslims MLAs, fixed for 7 February. The officials explained to the leader of the batch the government's viewpoint as set out in the Premier's statement yesterday. The negotiations proceeded till 4 p.m. in the afternoon with no settlement. Shortly after, in the afternoon the police removed Khan Bahadur Nawab Siddiqi Ali Khan, leader of the batch, along with nine Muslim volunteers, in two cars, to an unknown destination. It is likely they will be released sometime later.

II

The decision of the Working Committee of the CP Muslim League yesterday against immediate civil resistance was unfavourably received at a mass meeting of Nagpur Muslims, which continued till the early hours of this morning. Maulana S.A. Rauf Shah, President of the CP League, who explained to the audience the Working Committee's decision, was heckled by the extremist section and ultimately he had to leave the meeting as he was not given a hearing.

Nawab Mohiuddin Khan, MLA, then took the chair and the meeting adopted a resolution advocating the launching of civil resistance today even without the sanction of the Council of the All India Muslim League to register the protest of Muslims against the inauguration of the Vidya Mandir Scheme in the province.

Accordingly, Khan Bahadur Nawab Siddiqi Ali Khan led the first batch today. Before starting in procession he described himself as the first 'dictator' and advised a Muslim gathering at the Mohinpura mosque, from where the batch started in procession towards the CP Secretariat, to remain peaceful. He added that only members of the League would be permitted to join the volunteers' batches. He said that he had resorted to direct action because Nagpur Muslims favoured this step, even though the All India Muslim League authorities had not permitted such a course.

He concluded by announcing that the next batch of five volunteers would offer satyagraha tomorrow. Mr Syed Masood Kadri Jagirdar of Balapur (Berar), one of the vice-presidents of the CP Muslim League, was among those who constituted today's batch of 10 Muslims.

III

25 January 1939

The Working Committee of the CP Muslim League met yesterday evening. Mr S.A. Rauf Shah presided. The political situation, with special reference to Muslims vis-a-vis the proposed inauguration of the Vidya Mandir Scheme by the government on January 26, was discussed at length, after which the committee authorized Mr S.A. Rauf Shah, Khan Saheb Abdur Rahman Khan, Mr Ahmed Hasan and Marahim to meet the Premier and discuss with him the Muslim grievances in respect of their educational needs and representation at local bodies.

Accordingly, these four League representatives had over two hours' discussions last night with the Premier and D.P. Misra at the Premier's residence on various questions affecting the Muslims.

During these talks, Dr Kazi Abdul Hamid (representing Congress-Muslims) who, it is learnt, had been deputed by Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, with a view to bringing about a settlement between the government and the Muslim League leaders, was also present. It is learnt that the discussions were general in character and were conducted in a very cordial spirit and revealed the possibility of an agreement being reached on all issues this afternoon. The Premier is understood to have assured the League leaders that he was prepared to concede all the reasonable demands of Muslims and clear away misgivings in their minds, if any, as regards the government's policy.

Judging from the trend of the talks, the chances of an understanding being reached appear bright.

11. The Future of Muslims: Firoz Khan Noon to Aga Khan, 2 February 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI.

... Looking back to my recent experience in India, I am left with the impressions that the Hindus are not in a mood to win the confidence of the Muslims. There is no genuine desire on their part to make friends with the Muslims. They are under the impression that they will get the Government of the country into their hands and that all minorities will be handed over to them, bound hand to foot, to deal with as they like. The Muslims of India are very frightened at the present position here. The present method of ruling India through the Congress dictators outside the Provincial legislatures is a thing which should be squashed as soon as possible. The Congress leaders seem to have no respect or value for the Muslim opinion or susceptibilities. I think Jinnah has done a most wonderful thing, although there was a time, as your Highness knows, when we of the Muslim Conference were diametrically opposed to him as leader of the Muslim League, for he was always trying to pull the Muslims away from the right path. I think since then he has changed and I have not the least doubt that he is the accepted leader of all Muslims all over India. Whenever people talked to me about him—people who used to criticize him bitterly in the past—they spoke in very high terms of him. If nothing else, he has really united the Muslims on one political platform, and that in itself is a great achievement. The Congress party do not appreciate or realize Jinnah's influence over the Muslim masses today, nor do they realize how much the Muslims are united and how bitter they are against the Congress. I think the time is coming when the Congress will again break out into something very funny. I am of the impression that Congress Governments are not making headway in India; they are becoming more and more unpopular and not making proper use of administrative machinery. If they continue in offices they will not have only annoyed a very large number of people, who will try to turn them out at the next elections, but they will also have made a mess of the administrative machinery by their queer legislation connected with the sacrifice of revenues and the imposition of new taxes. I think the British authorities were very long-sighted in persuading the Congress to take on office and then in having done their best to keep the Congress in office in spite of enormous criticism. Although the Muslims are still very bitter over certain matters, I think that the recent split in the Congress camp must have given the Muslim leaders food for thought in as much as it has broken the solidarity of the Congress ranks and brought out their differences prominently. I feel that the time and atmosphere are not yet ripe for a Hindu-Muslim understanding, and I doubt whether it ever will be, because the majority community are showing a great lack of the primary quality of all rulers, namely, generosity towards the weak and towards the minorities. Jinnah has a pamphlet, the first edition of which has already been exhausted, containing the atrocities committed by Congress Hindus on Muslims in the provinces where the Hindus are in a majority and the Congress is ruling.

I think the best policy for the Muslims is to sit tight, and in spite of their grievances against the British authorities and their suspicions, they will eventually find that they will succeed to greater extent by allying themselves with the British than with the Congress. In the Congress camp, besides Mahatma Gandhi, I do not see anybody with any great vision....



12. Note on Muslim Satyagraha Against Vidya Mandir Scheme at Nagpur AICC Papers, File No. G-26, 1938–39, NMML.

4 February 1939

For three or four months prior to the 25th January 1939, there has been some talk among the Muslims about their launching civil disobedience against the Vidya Mandir scheme. The decision of Government to inaugurate Vidya Mandirs on the 26th January 1939 has been erroneously regarded by the Muslims as a breach of a promise alleged to have been made by the Prime Minister to Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, Honorary Secretary of the All-India Muslim League in December 1938 to call a conference of the Muslim members of the Assembly to discuss the Vidya Mandir scheme, to devise a plan acceptable to the Muslims, and until then not to proceed further with the scheme. The fact is that all that the Hon'ble the Prime Minister promised to the Nawabzada was to call a conference or to appoint a committee to consider the question of giving an impetus to Muslim education. No promise was made to suspend the Vidya Mandir scheme. This has been made clear in a press note issued on the 26th January 1939, of which a copy is attached.

2. The talk about a Muslim satyagraha at Nagpur became definite when news of the decision of Government to inaugurate Vidya Mandirs on the 26th January 1939 became known. On the 25th January 1939, finding that the wilder (sic) elements at Nagpur were keen on launching satyagraha at the Secretariat on the 26th, Syed Abdur Rauf Shah, MLA sent a telegram to the Nawabzada at Lucknow asking for instructions. The Nawabzada replied stating that starting civil disobedience without the sanction of the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League was unauthorized and inadvisable, and that satyagraha must await the result of the conference of the Prime Minister with the Muslim MLAs and the decision of the Working Committee. On the same day, the CP and Berar Muslim League passed a resolution advising no Muslim League organization or member in the province to begin direct action until the results of the conference of the Prime Minister with the Muslim MLAs, which was fixed for the 7th February 1939, were available. Some Muslim Leaguers headed by Khan Bahadur Siddique Ali Khan, MLA (Central), and Israr Ahmad were not however prepared to heed either the instructions of the Nawabzada or the resolution of the CP and Berar Muslim League. These two gentlemen, viz., the Khan Bahadur and Israr Ahmad headed a procession to the Secretariat on the 26th January. They were not allowed to enter the Secretariat compound. The Khan Bahadur and several others begged the police to arrest them. Eventually, 10 volunteers including the Khan Bahadur were arrested in the afternoon and released after being taken to the Sitabuldi police station house. There was no satyagraha on the 27th, 28th and the 29th. On the 28th, Khan Bahadur Siddique Ali Khan and some other members of the Council of Action, formed at Nagpur to conduct the satyagraha, met the Hon'ble Prime Minister at the latter's request. The Prime Minister's idea in asking the Council of Action to meet him was to see if it was possible to secure a postponement of the satyagraha until after his meeting with the Muslim MLAs on the 7th February in order that the general atmosphere may not be unfavourable for the proposed conference. The discussions lasted for about four hours. The Council of Action was prepared to suspend satyagraha if the Prime Minister gave an assurance that Government would implement the decisions reached at the conference. It was constitutionally impossible for the Prime Minister to give such an assurance on behalf of Government, but he was prepared to go as far as possible and he was ready to assure the Council of Action that he would make the utmost endeavours to see that the conference devised a solution of problems affecting Muslim education, acceptable alike to Government and the Muslim members of the conference. This assurance did not satisfy the Council of Action and the negotiations ended unsuccessfully. As it was clear that satyagraha will be resumed, Government decided to take the following line of action:

(i) Satyagrahis were to be arrested as soon as they committed an offence.

(ii) The persons arrested were to be detained in the Kotwali or any other station house for a few hours and then released, but investigations into the offences for which they were arrested, were to be made and when they were let off after a few hours' detention, they were to be informed that the cases against them would be taken up in a specific court on a specified date, the date to be any date after the 7th. The Hon'ble Prime Minister carefully considered whether the persons arrested should not be tried immediately and be further dealt with according to law. He felt however that prosecutions which would result in the offenders being sentenced to imprisonment, would be prejudicial to a favourable atmosphere for the conference on the 7th. On the other hand, the line of action decided by Government would leave it free to carry on with prosecutions if the conference failed or the general situation so demanded.

3. Satyagraha was resumed on the 30th, and on that day 10 persons were arrested and let off after being told that the cases against them would be taken up on the 13th. Satyagraha also took place on the 31st. On that date 30 persons, including 10 persons arrested on the 26th and 10 arrested on the 30th, were taken into custody. They were also let off and a date for their appearance in court was given. The persons arrested include Khan Bahadur Siddique Ali Khan and two members of the Nagpur Municipal Committee, viz., Mr Ibrahim Khan and Mr Abdul Majid pleader. The arrests were made on the 30th and 31st under section 145 (joining or continuing in unlawful assembly knowing it has been commanded to disperse) CrPC Satyagraha also took place yesterday the number of persons arrested being 36. The persons arrested on the 3rd include Mr Israr Ahmad and Mr Kasim Ali, Editor *Jaddo-Jahad*.

It should be made clear that gentlemen like Syed Abdur Rauf Shah and Khan Sahib Abdur Rahman Khan are not in favour of the direct action which is being resorted to by certain sections of the Muslims of Nagpur. The Muslim papers sympathize with the satyagraha and have even gone to the length of advocating it. Other papers consider satyagraha unreasonable. On the whole, there is no need to view the satyagraha with any considerable anxiety. The question of the policy to be adopted in connection with this satyagraha will have to be re-considered after the meeting of the Prime Minister with the Muslim MLAs. It may be that the results of the conference will lead to the abandonment of the satyagraha. If, on the other hand, it is not abandoned, it would be necessary to take strong action against the satyagrahis.

13. On Muslim League Complaints Against Bihar Ministry:

Hallet to Shri Krishna Sinha, 6 February 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI.

[Extract]

... I now refer to the position of the Muslim League. I quite recognize that the League has made very unfair attacks on you and your colleagues; they have referred to the 'atrocities' committed by Congress governments, but no Muslim to whom I have talked to on this point could give me very definite instances of 'atrocities'. Their general view seemed to me to be that in certain instances Hindus have been encouraged to make attacks on Muslims because they believe that the present governments in power will take a lenient view of their activities. I do not for a moment suggest that there is the least justification for this belief; in the Trilokri case of Hazaribagh and in the case of Muzaffarpur district when some Muslim houses were burnt, you took in my view the only possible action, and I do not see how any reasonable person could criticize what you did. You have also published statements showing that Muslims have got a fair percentage of appointments,

a point on which I have always been completely satisfied. But if the belief exists, even though it may not be justified, and if the existence of the belief has deleterious effects, what can we do? One obvious remedy should be secured by the increase in the publicity staff which has lately been agreed upon.

There have been occasions on which Muslims have indulged in inflammatory and dangerous speeches. But the Bhagalpur trouble last August showed as far as I could see that it was the act of six of one-and-half-a-dozen; that the Hindu Mahasabha and their followers were as responsible as the Muslim League. I may be wrong, but as I have already pointed out to you I feel that in that case you would have been in a more satisfactory position, if you had agreed to the issue of definite orders. It always seems to me and this opinion is based on a good deal of experience that if contending parties know exactly what view government or government officers backed by government take, there is less reason to anticipate any breaches of the public peace or infringement of the law.

14. Aga Khan on Prospects of Congress–League Entente:

Aga Khan to Firoz Khan Noon, 7 February 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

I am told Sir Sikander has a very satisfactory scheme of Federation. I have not yet seen it. Meanwhile the following interesting report:

Making it perfectly clear that I was only talking for myself alone, I had a long talk with Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel at Bardoli.¹ The talk was full and free and friendly, and neither of us tried to hide anything in any way or manoeuvre for position, but we opened our hearts to each other. I have returned with the very strong conviction that a full and complete agreement, as far as one can humanly foresee, on Muslim interests, could be reached now between the Congress and Muslim League, provided the Muslim League did not insist on its being recognized as the sole representative body of the Muslims of India, and did not insist on the Congress accepting its own position as purely a Hindu body. This does not mean that the Muslim League is asked to give up its contention that it is the sole representative body of the Muslims or to admit that the Congress is a national representation, but the quality and character of the two bodies need not be described and the pact could be signed between the two for the common service and welfare of India and all its inhabitants irrespective of race and religion.

On some of the following points, I find that Mahatmaji, with the full consent of the Sardar, would be willing, in case of a pact, to meet our wishes:

Representation in all Government and Municipal services, either according to the population basis or, alternatively, according to the weightage given to us, a minimum efficiency test in each case is necessary, so that if the people they represent are not capable of passing this minimum test, then in those cases it falls through. The word ‘minimum’ is the important point in this connection which would need clarification by the two bodies.

Hindustani—That a grammar should be published in the production of which learned Muslim philologists should play an important and equal part. A dictionary is being published by a gentleman from the Osmania College of the Hindustani language. I dare say if matters got so far, this dictionary could be placed before Muslim philologists for further discussion.

Education—if so desired, that the public grants for Muslim education should be handed over, where Muslims are in a minority, to their co-religionists to be spent for the best interests of Muslim culture and Education. Where Muslims are in a majority, public grants for education should be similarly handed over to Hindus, if desired by them.

No attempt to be made to crush the independent tribes on the Frontier but recognition of their position as a neighbouring state similar to Nepal, and the handing over of relations with them from the Government of India to the North-West Frontier civil administration.

On all these points and any other safeguards for Muslim religion and culture, Mahatmaji was most anxious to meet wishes in a friendly way. I think it would be a terrible mistake in the interests of the Muslims, if the League persists in refusing a pact with the Congress simply and solely because, in the preamble, the two bodies are not described and explained in a manner agreeable to the leaders of the League.

Do you think you could use your influence to get the High Command of the League to take this practical and statesmanlike view of the position and meet the Congress on friendly and equal terms to contract such a pact? After that everything will be plain-sailing and an All India Federation, based on popular will, would once more be a matter of general consent and desire.

I am not member of the League, and do not wish publicly to do anything so long as there is any hope of the League coming to terms with the Congress, because I do not want the High Command of the League to feel that I have had any part in bringing about this happy end. I want the full glory of it to go to those who are the League's leaders.

¹ The Mahatma told Mirabeen on 16 January: 'There is nothing to report about Aga Khan's visit. He wants the Congress to settle with Jinnah if it is at all possible.'

15. Cawnpore Riots, Heavy Toll, Sixty Killed on Sunday: Police Open Fire Seven Times

National Herald, 13 February 1939.

The riot situation in Cawnpore grew worse on Sunday, as indicated by the following facts:

The police opened fire on crowds seven times, in the course of the day, three times at one place, namely Moolganj, the storm-centre of the trouble.

Six hundred were arrested in the course of the day.

The casualties were 60 killed and 300 injured, a small number of them being women.

The hospitals are overcrowded with the injured, who number nearly 200. Medical help is being sent from Lucknow.

Pitched Battles

Pitched battles were the usual form in which the communal madness expressed itself. Streets were littered with broken lathis, brick-bats, sodawater bottles and splintered glass. Stray assaults took place in by-lanes.

The Cawnpore Auxiliary Force and the Congress evacuated from danger-zones several thousands of Hindus and Muslims.

Extra Police

On account of the disturbed conditions, people, specially those belonging to the working classes, are making an exodus from the city.

Extra police have been drafted from the districts, and patrols are going about.

But a common complaint is that the police force has not been able to cope with the situation. The Hindus, living in outlying parts of the city, bitterly complain of inadequate protection.

... The police fired seven times before sunset today on crowds of rioters—thrice at Moolgunj, once at Nayaganj, once at Safiabab, once at *Deputy-ka-parao* and once at Sitamau.

The number of those killed and injured was not high. As soon as the firing was over numerous rioters were rounded up and sent to the lock-up.

... Telephoning at midnight on Sunday. *The Herald* correspondent states:

Over 600 persons have been arrested up to now. Two hundred extra police have arrived from other districts. The Inspector-General of police has also arrived. The extra police contingent includes Europeans. Since the evening reports of rioting Patkapar, Dhankutti, Dalepurwa and at Bacongan have come. Throughout the city from housetops people are yelling. From some places they are beating drums and blowing conches.

... About 10,000 persons have already left Cawnpore and 300 passengers are detained at the Cawnpore Central Station wanting to leave....

It is generally realized that the police force is still short of the requirements.

The military have since been posted at Chananganj, Sitamau and Subzimandi.

Since the evening a large number of arrests for violation of the curfew have been made but the number is not definitely known.

16. On Reorganization of the Muslim League: M.A.H. Ispahani¹ to M.A. Jinnah, 18 February 1939

Z.H. Zaidi (ed.), *M.A. Jinnah-Ispahani Correspondence 1936-1948*, Karachi, 1976, pp. 124-27.

Calcutta

18 February 1939

Dear Mr Jinnah,

My long silence must have given you rest and relief.

I have been extremely busy with political and commercial work for some days and have therefore not found the time to have my usual chat with you.

Since I last addressed you, I am pleased to inform you that much progress has been made in the re-organization of Muslim League in the interior. The Parliamentary Board met two weeks ago and realized that without funds nothing could be done. On the spot, Rs 3,000 were raised, half of which amount comes from our firm. We shall, without difficulty, raise a further Rs 3,000 or Rs 4,000 shortly, and with Rs 5,000 Maulana Akram Khan feels confident that the Leagues in the interior will be established. We meet weekly and some times bi-weekly.

I am enclosing herewith a circular published under my signature, as a result of which, Members of the legislatures met on the appointed date. I am pleased to inform you that the following Resolutions were passed:

- (1) That a Bengal Legislatures Muslim League Party be formed.
- (2) That a committee consisting of the following members be appointed to draft Rules and Regulations of the Party and to place the same for the consideration of the Party at a meeting to be convened within a week:

Members:

1. Maulana Akram Khan, MLC
2. Mr M.A.H. Ispahani (Convener)
3. Mr Fazlur Rahman
4. Mr Abdul Karim
5. Khan Bahadur Muazammudin Hussain, MLC
6. Maulvi Abdul Bari

7. Maulvi Mafizuddin Ahmed
8. Mr K. Nooruddin
9. Mr Ahmed Hussain
10. Khan Bahadur Mohammed Ali
11. Maulvi Masud Ali Khan Panni

And, in compliance with the Resolutions, I have sent out a Draft of the Rules and Regulations, a copy of which I am enclosing herewith for your information. The Drafting Committee meets tomorrow at Camac Street, and after making any amendments that may be considered necessary to the Draft Rules, will fix a day for the meeting of the Members within the appointed time.

The response so far is very encouraging indeed because, without any effort, we have been able to secure 65 signatures in the Lower House and we hope to secure almost 85 per cent of the Muslims in the Upper House. The Lower House canvassing is not yet complete and I shall, therefore, be surprised if the figure does not approach 75. Of course, threats had to be used in order to secure the formation of the Parliamentary Party. Nooruddin and I made it very clear that whether we got any encouragement or not, we would form a Party consisting of even 3 Members of the Legislature. The so-called High Command lost nerve and could not ward off the formation of such a Party with sufficient safety to themselves any longer.

You may have read of Shamsuddin's² resignation from the Cabinet before this letter reaches you. The reasons that he has given in his letter of resignation are, of course, utter tripe. The real reason is that when Shamsuddin was brought in he gave an undertaking that he would bring with him 6 to 7 of his followers. But the poor man could not bring even one with the result that he had to go out because not even the most idiotic Member of the Coalition Party would allow the gaining over of one man from the Opposition at the cost of a single portfolio. Poor Shamsuddin—he goes back once again to where he belongs.

I consider the Coalition Party to be stronger than ever this Session and there is not the least likelihood of any censure being attempted or any cut being carried against the Cabinet.

Confidentially, I am told that there is a lot of money being thrown about by the Congress and Birla; whether this will be beneficial to the Opposition seems extremely doubtful.

The Calcutta Municipal (Amendment) Bill³ will come before the House on the 24th instant and the Speaker has assured us that no further Adjournment Motions will be permitted on that day as the Congress have employed the tactics of continuously moving the Adjournment Motions with a view to postpone the consideration of the Municipal Bill. I shall speak on that day. A public meeting has been organized today by a few unknown Muslim hirelings to support the system of Joint Electorate. You shall read that this attempt proved abortive because arrangements are being made in that direction.

I shall be obliged if you will send me a copy of the Muslim League Central Legislature Party [rules].

With kind regards to Miss Jinnah and yourself.

¹ M.A.H. Ispahani (b. 1902); educated at St John's College, Cambridge; called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 1924; joined family business of M.M. Ispahani Ltd at Calcutta in 1925; elected to Calcutta Corporation (1933), Deputy Mayor (1941–42); member, Bengal Legislative Assembly (1937–47); member of the Working Committee, Bengal Provincial Muslim League (1937–47); member of the Working Committee, All India Muslim League (1941–47); member Constituent Assembly (1946–48); Pakistan's first Ambassador to USA (1947–52); High Commissioner for Pakistan in the UK (1952–54); Central Minister of Industries and Commerce (1954–55); resigned August 1955; Pakistan's Ambassador to Kabul (1973–74).

² Shamsuddin was a left-winger and along with Nausher Ali, continued to express bitterness at Fazlul Huq's betrayal of the Praja cause. His inclusion in the ministry was resented by 'the party whips' who were anxious not to have left-wing followers inside the fold.

³ The principal features of the Calcutta Municipal (Amendment) Bill were the re-introduction of separate electorates and a provision by which officers of the Corporation were to be appointed by the Public Service Commission. But according to the Governor, the real issue was 'how far Muslims will succeed in ousting Hindus from their strongholds of political power, among which the Calcutta Corporation is one of the most important.'

17. The Communal Situation in UP: Harry Haig to Linlithgow, 25 February 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

[Extract]

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

The chief event since I wrote my last fortnightly report on 8th February was the very serious outbreak of communal rioting in Cawnpore. This started on the evening of February 11th, and except for one accidental clash on the morning of the 13th the serious trouble was over by the evening of the 12th. That I think was a very satisfactory result, considering that Cawnpore is undoubtedly the most difficult and dangerous city in the whole of this Province, and I should judge one of the most turbulent in India. The District Magistrate handled the situation very effectively and retained throughout the general confidence of the public. The military forces cooperated with the maximum of effectiveness as a result of plans carefully devised and discussed well in advance. The fact is that we have been fully aware for the last eighteen months that we might almost at any time have a serious outbreak in Cawnpore, and preparations have been made accordingly. The Inspector-General of Police brought in with great promptitude substantial reinforcements of police which had to be drawn from a large number of districts. Though the actual rioting and murders were brought under control quickly, the temper of the two communities still remains exceedingly bad, and there has been a good deal of anxiety with regard to the approaching Muharram. Yesterday I heard that the Muslims in Cawnpore have decided not to take out their Muharram processions. The reason for this I am told is two-fold. In the first place, it enables them to assert a grievance and to pretend that they were not receiving sufficient protection, though in fact the District Magistrate has offered them full protection for their Muharram processions. In the second place, I understand that they are really very nervous that whatever arrangements might be made, Muharram processions might lead to a further outbreak of fighting and they do not wish to risk this. In the recent riots so far as casualties are concerned the Muslims came off the better, the Hindus having over thirty deaths and the Muslims only eleven or twelve. I gather they are somewhat apprehensive of retaliation with a view to making the numbers more even. I enclose in continuation of my report to the Secretary of State a copy of a statement made by the Premier in the Legislative Council on February 18th. The facts are practically the same as those given in my report, but he has added some timely acknowledgments.

2. The Muharram situation throughout the Province gives ground for considerable uneasiness. Practically every Commissioner comments on the aggressive and provocative nature of the Hyderabad Day demonstrations, to which I referred in my letter of February 8th, and the very serious and immediate deterioration of the communal situation which resulted. Hyderabad Day caused an immediate riot in Bareilly, and it was due to the same cause that some little time later there was a disturbance in Benares which fortunately did not spread very far. On top of this the riots at Cawnpore have created a great deal of uneasiness and ill-feeling throughout the Province.

Our officers are of course very much on the alert everywhere, but it would be too much to expect that we shall get through the Muharram without disturbances somewhere. Our main anxiety however will be the possibility of a further outbreak in Cawnpore and Bareilly. Apart from the Hindu-Muslim trouble, the Sunnis and Shias in Lucknow have during the last few days stirred up again the Madhe-Sahaba controversy, and it is by no means impossible that we shall have Sunni-Shia rioting in Lucknow before the Muharram is finished. All this means that our police resources are strained to their utmost, and I doubt if there has ever been a time when ill-feeling between the two communities has been so acute and dangerous.

18. Jinnah on Federation: Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 February 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI.

[Extract]

I sent for Jinnah a couple of days ago and had a long and very interesting talk with him. I tackled him first about his attitude towards the Indian Sandhurst Committee. The gist of his reply was that its personnel was not sufficiently representative and that he had not been taken sufficiently fully into consultation regarding it. We proceeded to discuss the general political position, and discussed at first, in very general terms, the position in regard to demand for representative government, and what he regarded as the uncertainty of federation. I asked him what suggestions he had to make, to which he replied that, while he did not reject the federal idea, it must be a federation which would ensure an adequate equipoise between Muslim and Hindu votes, and in which there should be an appropriate balance between the communities. I asked him how he contemplated securing this, to which he replied that he had in his mind the manipulation of territorial votes and the adjustments of territorial divisions as to bring it about. He blushed a little as I pressed the implication of these suggestions upon him, but in the end maintained that at any rate his project for the carving up of this country was a better one than Sikander's. He admitted coyly that it might possibly prove very difficult in that event; and I asked him whether in fact he wanted us to stay. He again admitted with some reluctance that it looked very much as though that was the position that was going to emerge; but he added that many were losing faith in us. It was perfectly clear that we had not yet made up our mind whether we are going to go or not; and the only possible course for the Muslims to take in these circumstances was to continue to abuse us as loudly as possible in public, partly because we were so clumsy in our handling of the situation, and partly because the Muslims must show the public that they were as good nationalists and as good Indians as any other community. Behind the scenes, they might adopt a more co-operative attitude so long, that was, as we did not intend to clear out. If on the other hand we really had in mind to abandon control of the country, then it was quite obvious that Muslims must bestir themselves and be ready to fight, and he felt sure that in doing so they could look also for the help of Congress.

19. The Communal Problem

Article by B.T. Ranadive, *National Front*, 12 March 1939.

12 March 1939

Tripuri may decide to give an ultimatum to British Imperialism and declare for national mobilization. Within a few months the nation will be called upon to forge its unity to resist Imperialism in a final battle. As condition precedent to its success the country has to solve the communal problem and meet the challenge of disrupters.

The Challenge to Unity

Within recent years this challenge has grown at every step. It is now two decades since India saw a genuine unity and understanding between the two major communities. It was in the first non-cooperation movement alone that the Congress secured the allegiance of an overwhelming majority from both the communities.

With the collapse of the national movement the initiative passed out of the hands of the Congress. The Muslim minority drifted away from the Congress and became a plaything of disrupters and agents of British Imperialism.

Imperialism Leads the Attack

Hindu-Muslim unity was the sheet-anchor of the National struggle in 1920. Gandhiji had taught the average Hindu and Mahomedan that the success of the struggle was dependent on Hindu-Muslim understanding. Imperialism launched its counter-offensive and attacked this very achievement of the first struggle, to disillusion and demoralize the average man. Through communal dissensions and widespread riots, it led an organized attack against what the ordinary man considered to be the one panacea against national oppression and slavery.

Enter the Communal Provocateur

The five years immediately following the end of the first struggle saw an ever-increasing wave of communal warfare. Between 1923 and 1927 no less than 450 persons were killed and 5,000 injured in these riots.

The succeeding years were years of labour struggles. In the cities the workers were uniting irrespective of caste and religious barriers. Here was a new challenge to Imperialism and the communal disrupters. Bent on preventing popular unity, Imperialism utilized the same old weapons and riots became more menacing than before. Between 1927 and 1929 not less than 20 serious riots occurred throughout the country. The 1929 riots in Bombay alone cost 200 lives.

Since then riots have occurred at regular intervals and the most trivial excuses have led to frenzied orgies. The communal passions once roused often found a logic of their own, and nothing that nationalist India could do, seemed to be effective against this fratricidal warfare.

Reactionaries Succeed

Gandhiji's repeated warnings and pleadings, the well-meant effort of a number of national leaders, and finally even the 21 days' fast which Gandhiji undertook in 1924—all these proved futile before the new counter-offensive. Determined to prevent a repetition of 1920 when Hindu and Muslim marched under one banner, Imperialism and the communal leaders won the first round. The 1930 struggle failed to enthuse the majority of the Muslim masses and even led to communal riots in some places.

A Menacing Situation

But today a still more menacing situation faces us. The communal leaders are directing all their fury against the Congress itself. It is no longer the Hindu Sabha or Hindus that are attacked in the press and the platform. The Muslim League and the communal organs are indulging in the most unscrupulous propaganda against the Congress. Having estranged the Muslim masses from the National Congress the communalists now seek to utilize them against the national struggle and the national organization. In 1930 they were content with a neutral attitude on the part of the masses; today they wish them to intervene actively against the National Congress when the struggle starts.

Twenty years of isolation have thus created an impossible situation. Unless the balance shifts in favour of the nation, one section of the people will be pitted against the rest in times of struggle.

Out-of-date Approach

This impossible situation is due to a variety of causes, chief among them being the failure of the national leadership to bring a new approach to the Hindu-Muslim problem. Since the collapse of the first non-co-operation movement the National Congress gradually drifted into leaving the Muslim masses severely alone. It retired before the organized orgy of riots and confined itself to seeking an understanding with notable Muslim leaders.

This was an approach borrowed from the old days when the National movement was the monopoly of a few intellectuals. It dates back to the days when the masses, either Hindu or Muslim, had not entered the political arena. With no masses to appeal to, with Imperialism exploiting the communal suspicions of the Muslim intellectuals, this was the only approach left to the national leaders.

New Conditions

But by 1920 the political landscape of the country had completely changed. The masses had entered the field. Their hopes and aspirations were roused. The Congress appealed to them directly for common struggle. The political struggle went beyond distribution of public posts and legislative representation. The innumerable economic struggles which broke out during this period, showed that if rightly approached, Hindu-Muslim unity could be kept up and strengthened. The nefarious game of Imperialism could be defeated.

Unfortunately the national struggle yet lacked a clear-cut economic and democratic programme. Its economic programme consisted of hand-spinning and weaving and it failed to understand the real economic problems of the masses. It saw only communal divisions, but failed to notice the communal unity that was being achieved in the economic struggles. The national leaders turned their back on these struggles, and unable to establish direct contact with the Muslim masses, followed the line of least resistance. The Muslim masses were left to the tender mercies of the communalists, except when they came under the influence of the workers' or peasants' organizations.

The growing discontent of the Muslim masses was thus easily canalized into communal channels. What could have been one of the greatest assets of the national struggle is rapidly becoming its liability.

Basis of Communal Outlook

It will be of course useless to deny that there are other causes besides the neglect of the joint struggle of the masses. The communal outlook cannot be blown up by a mere championing of economic demands. For centuries the different sections have lived as Hindus or Muslims. The past history of India has been interpreted to them as a history of perennial riots. The Muslim minority is not yet free from its suspicions of the majority community. The lack of democratic traditions often creates strange misgivings about the future of the Muslim religion.

It is on these traditions and suspicions that communalism feeds. Imperialism would not have proved successful had these traditional influences not existed. It is these influences that often make the Muslim masses look up to communal disrupters as the real protectors of their interests. The demand for separate electorates, for reservation of public posts, for cultural and religious freedom—these find their sanctions in the fear and suspicions shared by the masses themselves. It is these misgivings again that from time to time render an approach to communal leaders necessary.

The legacy of bitterness created through communal riots only strengthens this outlook and intensifies the scramble for public posts.

Congress Assurances to Minorities

To allay these suspicions and place the bonafides of the national struggle beyond doubt, constitute the beginning of communal unity. The National Congress has done its best to meet these suspicions by its preparedness to concede the demands for communal representation in services and legislatures, by offering guarantees to protect Muslim culture and religion. It has even swallowed the notorious Communal Award in the interests of national unity.

And yet it has signally failed in creating a better understanding with the Muslim masses. The existing policy of communal appeasement only stimulates the disruptive tendencies; the rapprochement with the minority masses remains as distant as ever.

Failure Leads to Blackmail

The reason is to be found in the lack of direct approach to the masses and too much emphasis on the communal leaders. The latter are keen on political patronage and spoils without struggle. They exploit the traditional fears and outlook for their own self-aggrandizement and to bolster up political reaction. They are encouraged to blackmail the national struggle so long as the minority masses remain their captives, so long as the National Congress fails to establish a direct contact with them.

Minority Demands the Beginning

The minority demands agreed to by the Congress do not offer a final solution of the communal problem. They are only the starting point, creating a better atmosphere. The real demands of the masses come from grinding poverty against which they battle every day. It is here that the minority masses are to be approached and their unity with the rest of the people stressed. The special minority demands are accessory and not primary, though without them a direct approach is rendered impossible.

New Forces

But the Congress, all these years forgot that starvation offered a link stronger even than hoary religion. The history of Trade Union struggles and the peasant movement in our country repeatedly showed how the economic tie is binding together thousands and creating a new unity overriding communal considerations. The unity and understanding forged in these struggles have stood the test of communal riots and repeatedly foiled the game of communal mischief-mongers. The recent happenings in Cawnpore, Calcutta and a number of other places demonstrate how the masses are capable of defeating communal machinations.

Even without a conscious effort this grim reality of economic poverty is forcing the communal outlook into the background. The repeated crises through which the Huq Ministry is passing, the divisions in Huq's ranks over agrarian issues and the rapprochement of the dissenters with the Congress, clearly show that even communalism has to give way before the dominant problems of the masses.

The neglect of this approach by the Congress was not accidental. It was only recently that a full-fledged economic programme figured on the Congress agenda. The formation of the ministries gave the Congress a splendid opportunity of defending the mass interests. The ministries however failed to come up to the mark; they avoided conflicts with the vested interests and lost the one weapon of swinging the Muslim masses towards the Congress. The same policy of drift and

compromise, which disfigure Indian politics today, prevented the Congress from chaining the communal devil.

No amount of cultural guarantees, negotiations or special representation will solve the communal problem unless the Congress identifies itself with the woes and difficulties of the minorities in their day to day life. So long as this does not take place, the Congress will continue to move in a vicious circle and be at the mercy of the communal leaders. The present line, which not only neglects economic struggles but also fails to approach the minorities in civic and other elections, which looks upon communal identities as sacrosanct, and divulges a guilty conscience in its outlook towards the minority masses, must immediately end.

It must be followed by a thoroughgoing change in the methods and outlook of the Congress. Years of isolation from the Muslim masses have invested the Congress with a peculiar Hindu atmosphere. Congress celebrations partake of the nature of Hindu festivals. Political speeches savour of Hindu ideology. Congress members in legislatures and municipalities do not make any special effort to serve the Muslim community. Congress Committees neglect the Muslims in their districts and taluks and approach only the majority community. Unless every Congressman makes a conscious effort to get rid of these shortcomings, unless the annual session gives a mandate to every Congressman to live up to his national convictions, no swing in favour of the Congress is possible. The impending struggle as well as the war situation demand an immediate change in these directions. Imperialism hopes to secure the necessary man-power for war with the aid of Muslim communalists. Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan with his rank anti-nationalism has already become the recruiting agent of the British Government. The game can be defeated only if the Congress shows sufficient vision and courage to save the minority masses from slaughter and the nation from a calamitous disaster.

To conclude, while not neglecting the communal organizations and leaders who carry weight with the minority masses, the Congress must approach them directly as citizens, as downtrodden sections. All reasonable demands regarding services, representation, cultural guarantees must be conceded. These however must be regarded as the beginning of rapprochement and not an end in itself. No final understanding is possible without a bolder championing of the economic demands and a direct approach through them. The Ministries must be asked to carry them out. Congressmen should place themselves in the forefront of day to day struggle and rid themselves of any Hindu bias. Tripuri must open up a new chapter to end the years of isolation.

20. On Jinnah's Politics: Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 March 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

[Extract]

11. ... I had an hour's discussion with Jinnah a few months ago, largely on the subject of Muslim grievances. He urged with great emphasis that the Muslims have not had a fair trial in the Congress majority provinces and though he does not deny the counter-charges against them being brought, he claims that the balance is very well on his side. He presented me with the reports of the various Committees of Enquiry, written, of course, from the Muslim point of view. I dare say that there may be something in the Muslim grievances though proof of specific instances is not easily forthcoming; and it is, equally, by no means simple to secure effective action—the value of which will have any permanence. But the main interest of our talk was that, after a certain amount of discussion of the general political position, he turned to me and said that he would frankly confess that he saw no solution and that he did not now believe that this country was competent to run a

democracy, and he and others who had advocated a reformed system of government had, he felt in the light of practical experience, formed a wrong judgment of the capacity of India to run such a system; that they had been carried away by their patriotic and nationalistic feelings into a wrong estimate of difficulties involved in the establishment and conduct of such a system; and that such view was not confined to the Muslims. On the Hindu side equally, more especially among the propertied people, it existed, and we were, he thought, coming to a point which Hindus of that type would be prepared to admit it, even as he was admitting it now. He was clear, that 'none of us' who had pressed for reforms had really thought the thing out at the time. They had been carried away by their natural desire for home rule and by their equally natural objection—an objection which any man must have—to government by aliens. But he was satisfied now, he thought, that the present system would not work and that a mistake has been made by going so far.

I dealt with him, in reply, on general lines and pointed out, perhaps somewhat unkindly, that one of his real difficulties was going to be the electorate at Home; that Mr Jinnah and other political leaders in the country, if what he has now told me was in fact correct, had helped to bluff His Majesty's Government and the electorate into thinking that their case for self-government under a scheme, such as embodied in the Act, was a good one, and that it would not be easy now to disillusion them without shaking their confidence very seriously. But, in any event, to what did he suggest that we should revert? Jinnah did not much like my criticism and you will not be surprised to hear that he has no positive suggestion whatever for carrying on the government of the country in the event of a breakdown of the present scheme! I feel no doubt that the Muslims are beginning to feel increasingly uneasy at what Jinnah described as Hindu arrogance, and increasingly apprehensive of the fate of a minority—even a minority of 90 million people—under the scheme of the Act. No doubt there is some little basis of this apprehension and I do not feel justified in holding that there is no foundation for the various allegations of unfair treatment in particular provinces which he made. But in Jinnah's case, as in that of other critics, I feel that at this stage there is nothing for it but to hold on and test the scheme further with a consciousness that it may break down or may prove impracticable and that if it does we shall have to think again. It would, of course, be the greatest mistake in any way to discount the importance of expressions of opinion of this character, particularly from a man of the standing of Jinnah; and we must give full weight to them. But the stage has not yet been reached at, which in any case has been established for going back to Parliament and with no stronger evidence to buttress an appeal for a radical change of policy than that men of experience and standing in this country do feel some uneasiness. And the problem of the alternative has not been tackled that I know of by any of our critics.

21. On Jinnah's Politics: Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 March 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

[Extract]

9. ... As for the other depressing material which goes home, I have I think in my various letters kept you in touch with the various pessimistic apprehensions that have from time to time being expressed to me, and my last letter will have shown to you the general Muslim feeling. I confess that I find the Muslims at the moment slightly exasperating, such as I sympathize in many ways with their point of view. Jinnah's attitude as described in paragraphs 18 and 3 of my letter of 28 February and 7 March, and in paragraphs 11 and 12 of my present letter which speaks for itself. But this latest contribution, today, has been under, I understand, a threat of resignation, unless his orders are complied with, to force the Muslims in the Assembly, a clear majority of whom were in

favour of Trade Agreement to adopt an attitude of neutrality in the division, with the result that the agreement has been thrown out by 59 to 47. And this, I gather, in the face of very strong support for the principle of the agreement from Sikander and from many individual Muslims. Jinnah's attitude is, I am told, that he wants a year in which to try out his present policy of supporting neither Government nor its opponents, in the hope that twelve months' experience will have convinced both parties of the extreme value of Muslim support, and will have led them to adopt a more supplicatory attitude than at present! I can quite understand Jinnah's feelings that he and his followers do not at the moment cut quite so much ice as they would like. But frankly a policy such as this seems to me on a long view likely to be disastrous from the general Muslims' point of view.

22. Muslims on Federation: Zetland to Linlithgow, 28 March 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI.

[Extract]

6. I had visits some few days ago from the two Indian Muslims who have been watching the proceedings of the Palestine Conference¹ over here, namely, Abdur Rahman Siddiqi and Khaliquzzaman². They talked a little vaguely about the Palestine problem and then turned to what they obviously really wished to discuss with me, namely, the position of the Muslim community in India, in the event of a scheme of federation in accordance with the provisions of the Act of 1935 coming into existence. They spoke very strongly on the question and told me that they did not think that it would be possible for the Muslims to acquiesce in the introduction of the scheme. I asked them whether in these circumstances they had any alternative suggestions of a constructive character to put forward. They replied that they had,³ and that what they would propose would be the establishment of two or three federations of provinces and States which would be coordinated by a small central body of some kind or another. The whole object of the schemes, of course, was to give the Muslims as great a control at the centre as the Hindus. They were very vague when they came to details, but I rather gathered that what was in their minds was a federation of the Muslim provinces and states in North-West India; a further federation of Bengal and Assam and possibly Bihar and Orissa in the east; and a further federation or possibly more than one federation, of the other provinces and states in the remaining part of India. They clearly had failed to consider the practical difficulties in the way of such a scheme, but I gathered from them that many Muslims were thinking on these lines and what they told me confirms the view to some extent that we should probably have greater difficulty in bringing the Muslims into the federation than the Congress. I must say that as we get nearer to the date when all parties will have to lay their cards upon the table, the difficulties of bringing the federation into existence seem to me to be gaining in magnitude.⁴

¹ The Palestine Conference was held in Egypt in October 1938. Abdur Rahman Siddiqi, Khaliquzzaman, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and Maulana Irfan were the representatives of the Muslim League and the Khilafat Committee. They stayed abroad from September 1938 to March 1939.

² Khaliquzzaman and Abdur Rahman Siddiqi met the Secretary of State for India on 20 March.

³ Khaliquzzaman's own account of the meeting, as described in *Pathway to Pakistan*, is: 'Lord Zetland was very cordial and after a few preliminary exchanges of views about the weather I started by giving him a brief survey of the Muslim relationship with the British Government extending over one hundred and fifty years and brought it down to the Government of India Act 1935. Thereafter I said, "Now that you are transferring more powers to India, you are doing it in such a manner that one hundred million Muslims might find themselves the slaves of the majority when you have completed the task." At this stage he interrupted me and made the same remark which was made by the Under Secretary,

namely, "But you do not suggest any alternative." It did not require any searching of my brain for I had already suggested the alternative to Col. Muirhead. Therefore, as soon as Lord Zetland raised the question of an alternative, I immediately replied, "You may partition the Muslim areas from the rest of India and proceed with your scheme of federation of the Indian provinces without including the Muslim areas which should be independent from the rest."

Lord Zetland: What would happen to the States?

I: They ought to follow their geographical situation. If they are in the Hindu zone, they must go with them and if they are in the Muslim zone they must go with that zone.

Lord Zetland: What about Defence?

I: For what period, my Lord? If you want to know for the period that you are associated, in some form *or* the other, with the administration of India there would be no difficulty in the defence of India, because you can use the armies of both these areas, according to your needs. But if you want to know for the period that you are not in any way connected with the administration of the country, then I beg of your Lordship not to put that question to me, for God only knows what would happen to us then.

Lord Zetland: Do you want an answer from me?

I: It would be presumptuous on my part to ask for an answer to this big question just after mentioning it to you. I have brought it to your notice that this is going to be the stand of the Muslims in the next session of the Muslim League. There is ample time for you to think about it.

⁴ While writing his memoirs, Khaliquzzaman secured the record of his meeting from the Commonwealth Relations Office. In a letter from UK's Deputy High Commissioner to Dacca (5 September 1953), he was told: 'My dear Governor, You wrote me on the 12th July asking if I could obtain from the Commonwealth Relations Office certain information about two interviews you had at the India Office in 1939.

2. I have now had a reply from the Department, in which they inform me—(i) that they confirm that an interview did take place between Lord Zetland, Mr Siddiqi and yourself in March 1939.

3. Lord Zetland recorded the main points of his talk with Mr Siddiqi and yourself in a letter which he subsequently sent to the Viceroy. He reported:

(i) That you and Mr Siddiqi evidently wished to discuss with him the position of the Muslim Community in India in the event of a scheme of federation in accordance with the provisions of the Act of 1935 coming into existence.

(ii) That you spoke very strongly on the question and told Lord Zetland that you did not think that it would be possible for the Muslims to acquiesce in the introduction of the scheme.

(iii) That in response to Lord Zetland's request for alternative suggestions of a constructive character you replied that you would propose the establishment of three or four federations of Provinces and States which would be co-ordinated by a small Central Body, the object of this scheme being to give the Muslims as great a measure of control at the Centre as the Hindus.

(iv) That Lord Zetland gathered that the idea in your minds was of a federation of Muslim Provinces and States in North-West India; a further federation of Bengal and Assam, and possibly more than one further federation of the other Provinces and States in the remaining part of India.

(v) That you reported that many Muslims were thinking on these lines.

(vi) That he deduced from the talk with Mr Siddiqi and yourself that there would now probably be greater difficulty in bringing the Muslims into the federation than the Congress....

5. I hope that the above material will be of some use to you and I shall, of course, be glad to ask the Commonwealth Relations Office to have another look for a record of your talk with an under-secretary if you care to write to me again about this.

Yours sincerely,
G.P. Hampshire

H.E. Choudhry Khaliquzzaman
Governor of East Bengal
Government House, Dacca.

Lord Zetland, in his letter to the Viceroy correctly states that we opposed the Scheme of Federation which, for other reasons, had already been rejected by the Muslims in 1934. He also rightly reported that, on this occasion, I talked of more federations than two. It was necessary for me to do so at that stage, because I wanted to bring in Assam and Bengal in one Federation and NWFP, Punjab and Sind in another and to leave the rest of India for the Congress to decide.



23. Partition of India

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 1 April 1939.

1 April 1939

The poison tree so carefully planted by British statesmen on the Indian soil and watered by generations of British rulers is now beginning to bear fruit, and well may our foreign masters who are anxious to perpetuate their hold on this country congratulate themselves on their foresight. It was Lord Minto, we believe, who first spoke of the Muslims in India as a distinct nation and encouraged openly their separatist conceit. Wedge after wedge has since then been driven between the two communities in the shape of separate electorates and communal awards. The whisper was assiduously circulated that the cultural and religious interests of the Muslim minority would be unsafe in the hands of Hindu nationalists unless they were hedged round by special safeguards. Leaders of the Muslim League woke up one fine morning to discover that even the political interests of Hindus and Muslims were not identical. And now has come the crowning discovery that Muslims in India are not a minority community whose interests could be safeguarded by protective measures, but that they are a separate nation who could live and thrive only in separate states where they would enjoy the absolute control of the legislative and administrative machinery.

A scheme to give effect to this idea has been drawn up by Dr Syed Abdul Latif of Hyderabad, Deccan, at the request of the Muslim League, and it has already received the blessings of those who condemn appeal to force in the case of Hitler and condemn Germany on that account as the disturber of Europe's peace use a different line of argument in India's case. The pretensions of the Muslim League must not be opposed because the arm-chair leaders of the League profess faith in violence and think they are stronger than the 250 millions of Hindu nationalists! An excellent argument which Mr Neville Chamberlain himself could scarcely improve upon.

Dr Latifi's scheme of partition is however not without its points of interest and gives us a glimpse of the crudities of the communal mind. Sind, Baluchistan, the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Kashmir, Khairpur and Bahawalpore should be united to form a Muslim State, and if necessary, the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir should be given adequate compensation for loss of territory. In the North-East, Bengal and Assam should be formed into another Muslim State and two other Muslim zones should be created round about Lucknow and Hyderabad. It is quietly suggested that the nine millions of Hindus and Sikhs who live in the Punjab should tamely migrate to the Indian States to give their 13 million Muslim countrymen adequate room for expansion. As for Bengal and Assam which are to be united to form another Muslim State the fact is clearly forgotten that while the number of non-Muslims in these provinces is considerably over twenty-seven-and-a-half millions to be precise, twenty-eight-and-a-half millions as per Census of India, 1931, are we to understand that these unfortunate people must submit tamely to frankly communal rule or leave their hearth and home to accommodate their heroic brethren? The absurdity of the scheme becomes still more obvious when we remember that in Hyderabad which is to form the centre of another Muslim State there are over twelve millions of Hindus and only one-and-a-half million Muslims. If the Maharaja of Kashmir can be made to part with his kingdom for adequate compensation, why cannot the same be done for the Nizam? Lucknow which is to form the nucleus of the Muslim zone in Northern India has a population of 142,461 Hindus and only 101,673 Muslims. Why should not the Muslims of the United Provinces and Hyderabad migrate to the North West and live peacefully among the Frontier Pathans, if the company of Hindus proves so distasteful?

We have reasons to suspect, however, that the framers of this crude scheme of partition are not very serious in their demands and that what they actually want is greater representation for their

co-religionists in the scheme of federation proposed by the British Government. 'The inclusion of the Indian States in an All-India Federation,' they say, 'should be made dependent upon their returning to the Central Legislature a sufficient quota of Muslims so as to maintain their present proportion at the Centre.' Why Indian States which have few Muslim subjects should be compelled to send Muslims to the Central Legislature to represent their Hindu subjects is a question that baffles one's understanding. Is it to keep Mr Jinnah and his 'strong' and 'violent' followers in humour? Is it in the interest of good government and democracy or is it simply to prepare the way for the final partition of India on communal lines?

24. Education of Muslims, The Pirpur Committee's Report, 8 April 1939

Indian Annual Register, Vol. 1, 1939, pp. 475-76.

To base an educational scheme on the creed of the leader of a political party is to import a method of education that finds favour in totalitarian states and is clearly contrary to sound principles of education, declared the Muslim League Committee presided over by the *Raja Saheb of Pirpur* in its report on the Wardha Scheme of Education issued from New Delhi on the 8th April 1939.

The Committee asserts that while the Wardha Scheme claims to exclude the religious institutions of different Indian communities, it really aims at supplanting all other religions by a new religion—Gandhism.

The Muslims in India, or in any other country, the Committee proceeds, form a nationality of their own with their own view-point on all aspects of life and can owe no allegiance to soul, blood or colour. The control of the education of a people placed in circumstances as the Indian Mussalmans are, should be essentially and exclusively in their own hands. It is an invariable corollary to their being politically and socially a distinct entity.

The Committee was appointed by the Council of the All-India Muslim League to investigate whether the Wardha Scheme would have the effect of preventing or circumscribing the progress of the Urdu language and Urdu script; and whether it would tend to obliterate or weaken the religious traditions and culture of Indian Mussalmans so that they might lose their separate national identity and be moulded according to the political ideals of the Congress.

The Committee was also entrusted with the task of finding out whether it is essential that Mussalmans should have their own separate organization for education, which should be under their own control and if so, how that could be given effect to. The report of the Committee which was presented to the Council of the League was signed by the Raja of Pirpur, Dr Afzal Hussain Qadri, Karimur Raza Khan and Prof. Syed Nawabali.

The Committee has found that the Wardha Scheme would both prevent the progress of the Urdu language and obliterate the religious traditions and culture of Mussalmans. For these reasons, the Committee recommends that Mussalmans must have complete control over their education as regards policy, finance, curriculum and supervision.

Discussing the effect of the Wardha Scheme on Muslim culture and traditions, the Committee says. 'Those who have experience on the working of the legislature in the Congress provinces are familiar with the callous disregard shown to the Muslim representatives. We need hardly emphasize that legislations are carried without giving due weight to the opinions of the Mussalmans. The experience gained in totalitarian states show that the culture and separate individual existence of minority nations has been undermined by the system of education and Muslim youth would be converted with apparent use of force to the Congress creed by the introduction of a similar system.'

The Committee explains that a system of primary education has been adopted in some countries as a means of wiping out the separate identity of various communities and welding them into a

corporate state as well as to propagate the political and economic principles of the party in control of the machinery of the state and for the conversion of the youth to the ideals of the party. 'We are in no way condemning the doctrine of non-violence, but in an educational scheme there must be scope for teaching different forms of political doctrines. If from their childhood boys and girls are made to think in terms of superiority of non-violence, it may produce the same results as the doctrine of superiority of race has done in certain totalitarian states. To base an education scheme on the creed of a leader of a political party is to import a method of education that finds favour in totalitarian states and is clearly contrary to sound principles of education. This will involve giving education a religious garb. It will clearly imply the welding of two nations into one synthetic culture by means of a system of primary education and will only facilitate the conversion of the youth to the ideals of the Congress.

'We think that in a country like India, a land of various nationalities, only that system of education can be successful which is calculated to make a person understand the society of which he is a part and to create a great body of skilful people who would be tolerant of other people's views. A system of education which emphasizes the superiority of one political ideal over others will encourage intolerance.'

The Committee demands the creation of an educational fund in every province for which contribution from the Provincial Governments of their due share for Muslim education should be secured. To manage this fund and to control direct and supervise Muslim education, the Committee recommends the creation of an All-India organization with a Central Education Advisory Board to assist it.

25. Suggestions on Promotion of Communal Unity

Leader, 9 April 1939.

9 April 1939

In the course of a letter Mr Mohamed Asghar Siddiqi (Jaunpur) makes some suggestions which if acted upon will, he thinks, promote cordial relations between Hindus and Muslims and prevent communal riots. He writes:

1. The whole history of Muslim India should be re-written as it has been written with the set purpose of poisoning the minds of boys.
2. Religious literature containing the virtues and goodness of Hinduism and Islam should be freely distributed all over India so that many misunderstandings about each other may be cleared.
3. Lessons of harmony and mutual toleration should be imparted to boys by the teachers in schools.
4. The Government should appoint unity preachers from amongst both the communities in every town and city whose duty should be to give sermons and deliver lectures on communal unity.
5. The city should be divided into small circles, each under a very strong peace committee. Each circle should have some mohallas under its supervision, and each mohalla should have its own peace committee, so that, in time of any trouble, the matter may at once be referred to mohalla committee.
6. There should be a unity board consisting of responsible persons of both the communities whose duty would be to settle any communal differences so that its germs may not infect

other localities. If the parties disobey their decision, the magistrate should at once take disciplinary action.

7. The magistrate should be at the head of all these boards, whose duty should be to keep a vigilant eye on the board so that the board should not misuse its powers.
8. Deterrent punishment should be given to rioters so that people should take lessons from it, and thus refrain from such lawlessness.
9. If any harm or loss is done to a community living in a quarter where the other community is in majority, the harm or any loss should be made good by the majority community, irrespective of the fact that the harm is inflicted by rioters from outside. In this way the majority would feel their own responsibility.
10. There should be mohalla guards consisting of Hindus and Muslims who should look after the welfare of the whole mohalla. If any untoward event happens the mohalla guard will be held responsible.

26. The Communal Situation in UP: Harry Haig to Linlithgow, 10 April 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

[Extract]

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

The acute ill-feeling between Hindus and Muslims continues to dominate the provincial scene. In Benares, in spite of vigorous administrative measures, occasional stabbings and short-lived panics take place. The Superintendent of Police, an excellent Muslim officer, broke down completely a short time ago and has had to proceed on leave. He was not in a good state of health when the riots broke out and was on the point of proceeding on long leave. The strain of the riots was great, and as soon as the acute phase was over the Hindus started a campaign of attacks on him (quite unjustified) for communal prejudice. I fancy he felt these a good deal. At Allahabad there have been some disturbances and stabbings which at one time created a great deal of nervousness. There again, however, administrative action has been prompt, vigorous and far-reaching, and I hope that the situation has practically returned to normal. You may be interested to read the comment of the *Leader* on these disturbances, and I enclose one of their articles. The *Leader* is of course published in Allahabad, and it is interesting to see how greatly they appreciate the action of the authorities. Cawnpore, I fear, is still in an unsettled state, and there has been great tension in Lucknow, though that is due to the controversy between Sunnis and Shias and not between Hindus and Muslims. I will refer to that later. But the result is that in four out of our five large cities (Agra being the one exception) extreme vigilance is required in order to prevent outbreaks of rioting. I mentioned in my letter of 25 March that there had been some unusual communal outbreaks in the district of Badaun. The situation there has been brought under control, but there is uneasiness in some of the neighbouring districts, and Muslim villagers are said to feel that they may be attacked.

So far as concerns administrative measures to deal with this situation, the action that is being taken or contemplated is in my opinion generally suitable. I mentioned in my last letter that it was proposed to appoint an official committee to look into the handling of the riots and to see whether any lessons could be drawn from their experience. The committee will consist of three or four officials with the Chief Secretary presiding, and they may be able to make some useful suggestions for the future. In the second place a letter is to be sent to all District Magistrates, summarizing and calling their attention to all the general orders and calling their attention to principles of the past

for dealing with these communal situations, and giving practical suggestions and instructions. The draft of this letter will be considered in Cabinet when we re-assemble after the Easter holidays, and I propose to put certain considerations plainly before the Ministers, in particular the necessity of making full use of our powers to control inflammatory speeches and writings, and the importance of letting our officers feel that they will have the confidence and support of Government and will not be liable to unreasonable attacks, and possibly arbitrary transfers subsequently, as a result of prejudiced complaints. So far for the most part these communal outbreaks have been handled by European officers, and the ministry have been good about supporting them. But in the ordinary administration it has been borne in on me a good deal lately that in the case of the non-protected services, for instance the provincial and subordinate civil services and police services, transfers and threats of transfer are setting up demoralizing conditions. The remedy is of course in the hands of the Ministers. All they have to do is to refuse to lend a ready ear to every suggestion and complaint, based on personal or political grounds, which comes to them from their supporters. But instead of ignoring these, they appear to welcome them, and I fear in some cases officers are beginning to be afraid to do their duty if it is likely to offend anyone who has any political influence with the Ministers.

While, as I have said, I think the administrative action at present in contemplation to deal with the Hindu-Muslim situation is adequate, my mind runs constantly on the underlying causes. We cannot afford indefinitely to have these conditions persisting; but unless something is done to deal with the underlying causes, I fear the present feeling will not only continue, but even grow worse. To my mind there is no doubt that the root cause of the trouble is that the Muslims look upon the present Government as Hindu, and to a very large extent the Hindus also have the same feeling. In these conditions it does not require any striking and obvious example of injustice, which indeed are really lacking to keep alive the flame of communal animosity. The Muslims, feeling themselves politically impotent, stir up religious issues. The Hindus, feeling themselves on top, tend to show an aggressive and intolerant spirit; and apart from these religious irritants the intrigue and petty political jobbery which is so prevalent gives the Muslims a sense of grievance and unfair treatment. As you know I have held these views about the fundamental causes of the Hindu-Muslim trouble for a long time, but I reproduce an extract from the last fortnightly report of the Commissioner of Meerut, dated 27 March 1939, which makes the same point. He wrote, 'I would not like to exculpate the organizations of either community. But the root of the matter seems largely to be that the Hindu rank and file think that now they can assert themselves and disregard Muslim susceptibilities to a greater degree than previously because in their view they have now a Hindu Government.'

I can myself see no cure for these conditions short of admitting to the Government the real representatives of the Muslim community. As you know, I have raised this matter with Pant more than once, but he does not seem to be considering it seriously. The point was raised also publicly in the Budget debates and elicited from the Government an un-favourable response. Circumstances have rendered it out of the question hitherto for Governors to take any effective action in regard to including members of important minority communities in their Cabinets in accordance with para VII of the Instrument of Instructions. The inclusion of two Congress Muslims in my Cabinet is of course not the slightest solace to the feelings of the Muslim community as a whole, who regard the present Ministry as a Hindu administration, the Congress as a Hindu body, and the Congress ministers as renegades. If, however, present tendencies continue, Hindu-Muslim antagonisms increase, and general opposition to the Government grows, the time may it seems to me come when the Governor of this Province may be in a position to insist that the Cabinet should be recast and should include representatives of the Muslim League. Meantime I shall continue to make clear my views to Pant...

27. On 'Partition Scheme': Linlithgow to Zetland, 12 April 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

[Extract]

I think that Pakistan Scheme received its first real ventilation at the recent meeting of the Muslim League at Meerut, but I have no doubt that we shall hear more about it, or its variants, from other sources. I am not unduly perturbed, for I do not believe that any of the schemes that have so far been ventilated have the least chance of surviving critical examination. Their real significance lies in the evidence they give of the increasing uneasiness of mind of the Muslims, an uneasiness which Jinnah, as you know, has already stressed very strongly to me, and which was again brought to my notice by Sir Ziauddin Ahmad, to whom I gave an interview a few days ago. Hindu-Muslim tension in the Provinces beyond any question is becoming more and more marked; and I fear that I must share your conclusion also that there is little prospect of improvement, and that the tension is likely, if anything, to increase rather than diminish so long as the Federation issue remains unsolved. Every party and every special interest in India is at the moment, as I see it, busy manoeuvring for a good position under Federation. All the more reasons for hoping that their Highnesses will, in their own interests, make a wise decision and that we may be able to get on with the scheme. In connection with Muslim uneasiness, an intelligence report has just come to hand from Karachi which suggests that Jinnah is communicating with Khaliquzzaman and (Abdur Rahman) Siddiqi, who, as you know, are still in Europe, and ordering them to get into touch with Hitler and Mussolini to whom they are to put the case of the Muslims in India. Goodness knows what Jinnah and his friends expect to get from this contact, but while I take the report with a grain of salt—I judge it by no means impossible that there is something of substance in it, given the present mood of acute, but rather formless apprehension, which is at the moment so evident amongst Muslims throughout India.

28. On 'Muslim Politics': Linlithgow to Hallett, 14 April 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2187, NAI.

[Extract]

2. ... What concerns me most at the moment in the general position over India as a whole is I think the increasing communal tension and what is quite clearly the extreme disquietude of the Muslims in so many Provinces and at the Centre, as to their position and the course of action and the policy which it would be wise for them to adopt. It is quite obvious that they are very seriously concerned and that they take what I would judge to be an unduly pessimistic view of the outlook for their community, and I wish I could see some practicable method of reassuring them without appearing to throw down a challenge to the other side. I have seen a number of prominent Muslims—Jinnah, Yaqub, Ziauddin Ahmad, the Nawab of Chhatari, among others—in these last few days and I have been very anxious to give them all possible opportunities of stating their case and of putting forward suggestions, but though without exception they have stated their case with great vigour and have left me in no doubt as to their apprehensions, I have found them by no means fertile in expedients for dealing with the situation. Thus it is no good suggesting as one of my visitors did, that the extended franchise is at the root of the trouble and that what we ought to do is to scrap the existing franchises and go back to the method of election based on Panchayats. Nor is there the least prospect of Parliament considering a radical amendment of the Act so as to put the Muslims in a safe position even if we could hope to get an amendment of that character

through without producing the most awkward repercussions here. Nor is the proposal that a Committee of Enquiry should be set up to consider in individual Provinces whether Governors have or have not used their special powers properly for the defence and protection of the minorities' practical politics (I have incidentally endeavoured to draw the attention of those who have put that suggestion to me to the probable attitude of the Muslim community were a corresponding suggestion to be made in the case of the Punjab or Bengal.) I will not develop this point further, for I have sent you separately a note left with me by Ziauddin Ahmad on which I have asked you to be so kind as to comment. But I would greatly appreciate it, if when you let me have your remarks on the points he has raised, you would let me have also any comments or suggestions that occur to you in connection with the assuring of responsible Muslim opinion, and the removal of the misapprehensions under which the community in certain respects unquestionably seems to labour. I would also greatly welcome it if you could give me your personal impression of the extent to which there is any foundation for suggestions which are so frequently repeated to me of indirect oppression of small Muslim minorities in agricultural districts. I know the difficulty of establishing the facts in cases of that character. But I feel no doubt that commissioners and other senior officers have a very just idea of the general position in the areas with which they are concerned. What is pretty clear I think is that we are moving into a period in which we may expect communal tension to become—if anything—more marked than before and in which the relative solidity of the Muslim League and the obvious uneasiness of prominent and responsible Muslims at the general trend of affairs in India is likely to make the situation more difficult, from the general points of view of maintaining law and order. If I am correct in that, it goes without saying that it is more important than ever to endeavour to make Congress Ministers and Governments realize the need for walking exceedingly carefully, and for doing everything that possibly can be done to remove misunderstandings and to take action where improper or provocative conduct by either side can be established.

29. On 'Muslim Attitude': Linlithgow to Zetland, 17 April 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI. See also enclosure 1.

[Extract]

I continue to be rather distressed by the Muslim attitude. The community are completely puzzled as to the wise course to adopt and they are not particularly well led, for Jinnah, though clever, keeps things too much in his own hands and is too much concerned to run a purely personal policy on a basis of mystery. They have clearly a very strong feeling that the ground is slipping from under their feet and that the 'arrogant' Hindu majority backed by better brains is engaged in undermining their position; and they are, or profess to be, doubtful as to the extent to which they can really depend upon us. I have given you in an earlier letter Jinnah's views, and I have in the last few days granted interviews to Chhatari, Sir Mohammad Yamin Khan, Sir Mohammad Yakub, Sir Ziauddin Ahmad and one or two others, all of whom have had the same tale to tell. When, however, I ask them what their remedy is, I get no suggestion that is worth serious consideration. Yakub ingenuously indicated that a restriction of the franchise and an amendment of the Act to take us back to election by Panchayats, would be of assistance. Others suggest a committee of enquiry to establish whether or not Governors have failed to discharge their special responsibility towards minorities; others on amendment of the Act definitely to safeguard the position of the Muslims. None of these, I need not say, is practical politics. But what is clear is that Jinnah is not the only person in the Muslim fold who has come to the conclusion that the demerits of home rule

from the Muslim point of view substantially outweigh its merits and that had it been possible to foresee how the situation would develop consequent on the grant to the demand of Indian nationalism of so many of its requests, the Muslims might have adopted a very different attitude! I had a long talk with Zafrullah and asked him what he thought about the position. He was as sensible and realist as usual, and told me that he was fully familiar with the grievances of his co-religionists, but that while no doubt here and there might be individual cases of oppression by Congress Governments or Hindu officials, he had come across no single case in respect of which Government could be pilloried and that he had informed his friends. I asked him whether there was anything which he thought I could usefully do. His reply was decisively in the negative, and he agreed that what it came to was that having clamoured for these powers and for this delegation of control by His Majesty's Government, the Muslims now found that it was not working out as they anticipated and did not like it. I have been interested in this connection to notice in more quarters than one the tendency to suggest that with the turn the world is now taking all parties here are much more temperamentally inclined to totalitarian government (which I need not say its implication of the underdog having his held kept well under) and that the attraction of democracy may be rather beginning to wear a little thin.

[Enclosure: 1]

Zetland to Linlithgow, 18 April 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

5. I agree with what you say in paragraph 9 as to the exasperating behaviour of the Muslims. But it is at least refreshing to find Jinnah admitting an error of judgment in pressing for Parliamentary Government for India and in saying further that the country depended upon us. I should, however, be not a little surprised if he proved willing to say the same thing in public. Indeed, I should be more surprised if, in the event of our even suggesting the possibility of our having to consider the imposition of any restriction on the free play of democratic forces in India, Jinnah did not shout as loudly against us as the most rabid Congressmen.

6. I notice from the various papers which have been sent to me that schemes to give effect to the idea underlying the Pakistan Movement have recently received a certain vague formulation. There is, for example, Sikander's seven-unit scheme and Afzal Husain's plan involving the creation of three independent sovereign States. This last scheme seems to run counter to the aspiration which has hitherto been understood to be the mainspring of the higher politics in India and which has found expression in a phrase 'India—a nation'. Nevertheless, the accumulation of evidence of the determination of the Muslims to look for some solution of the federal problem, which will secure them against Hindu domination, cannot be ignored. I am beginning to wonder if the hesitations of the Nizam may not be due, in part in any rate, to similar thoughts.

30. 'Why I Resigned': Sir A. Ghuznavi's Statement

Tribune, 19 April 1939.

New Delhi
18 April 1939

Sir A.H. Ghuznavi¹ in the course of a statement says:

'Since the announcement of my resignation from the Muslim League Party in the Central Assembly I have been flooded with enquiries as to my reasons for it. The enquiries have been so

persistent and have come from so many different quarters that I have no alternative other than seeking the assistance of the Press in this connection, even at the risk of giving the matter more publicity than I ever intended to.

‘In the first place, I asked myself what was it that led to the formation of the party and why was it such a success from the very start. The party was formed to unite and consolidate the Muslim elements in the Central Assembly who up to a year ago had counted for very little, as they were divided into small groups and on all important divisions completely stultified themselves by dividing almost equally between the two lobbies. The effect of this consolidation of a very large majority of the Muslim members under one banner incidentally vested the Muslims with power to influence the decisions of the Assembly in whichever direction they pleased. It thus became the instrument for the effective enforcement of Muslim policy at the Centre. The pity of it is that the Muslim League has so far failed to define its policy in most matters that come up before the legislature. But nevertheless the Muslim League Party having held the balance of power in the Central Legislature was able to, and did in fact, bring about positive decisions in all vital matters in accordance with its wishes. That was the source of its strength and power.

‘The next consideration was whether there had been of late an abandonment of that position and a departure from that policy. Undoubtedly there had been. During the last fortnight or three weeks the party had voluntarily abdicated that position and condemned itself to the pursuit of a barren and futile policy of neutrality in all matters of importance which led nowhere.

‘More than that. Even this policy of neutrality was not being followed in its entirety. For members were at liberty to give expression to their individual views on any matter that came before the Assembly. The result was that the Party were making themselves ridiculous and would soon cease to command respect and attention.

‘Further, it is an open secret that serious differences have arisen inside the Party since this policy has been announced. The differences that arose inside the Party over the Indo-British Trade Agreement and the pressure that was brought to bear upon different sections of the Party to persuade them to continue the futile attitude of neutrality, nearly rent the Party asunder. In all likelihood the strain may prove too much for the members in the near future.

‘What then should be our policy in the Centre? Frankly speaking, I have not been able to reconcile myself to this policy of neutrality which appears to me to be a counsel of despair. I consider that a political party is after all an instrument for the achievement of certain objectives and it would not be right to sacrifice the objectives themselves for the sake of the instrument. By mere organization the Muslims cannot expect to hold their own in India. There must be something more. To me it appears to be obvious that for the Muslims, situated as they are at the Centre, it is open to pursue one out of two possible courses; they should either decide to make common cause with the Congress and join them without reservation in the effort to secure political freedom for India, leaving their differences with the Congress to be settled after the common goal has been achieved, or they should elect to fight the Congress and to convince it that it is impossible to carry on the struggle for freedom until the differences between the two communities have been settled. In case it is decided to follow this last course, it would have to be made clear to the Government that though this struggle between the representatives of the two major communities in India may have the incidental effect of enabling the Government to win all important divisions in the Central Assembly, Government should not delude themselves with the idea either that they have suddenly become popular or that their policy has become acceptable to the country. Any advantage that may thus accrue to the Government could be more than made up after the differences between the Congress and the Muslim League have been resolved.

'The Muslim League Party at the Centre, however, have decided to follow neither of the two courses. They have declared that the Congress is their enemy and the Government is not their friend and that consequently they will not fight the Congress because that would help the Government and they will not fight the Government because that will help the Congress. A more useless and sterile policy it would be difficult to imagine.

'My conviction is that the pursuit of this policy will render the Muslims of no account in Central politics and will force upon Government the conviction that the only true basis of a political settlement is to come to terms with the Congress Government have already given a number of indications that their policy strongly tends in that direction and the exhibition that the Muslim League Party has given of their bankruptcy in statesmanship and political foresight will serve to remove any doubts that Government may have had in their mind. I would ask my late colleagues in the Muslim League Party and the Muslim public to give serious thought to the matter and give a definite shape to the policy that they intend to pursue.'

¹ Sir Abdul Halim Ghaznavi (1876–1953); born at Tangail in district of Mymensingh in East Bengal; educated from City College School and St Xavier's College, Calcutta; was a devout disciple of Surendranath Banerjea who inspired him to politics; joined Indian National Congress in 1905 and took an active part in the Swadeshi movement of Bengal, opened 'The United Bengal Stores' in Calcutta to popularize Swadeshi goods and suffered heavy losses; member of the Indian Legislative Assembly from 1926 to 1945 and was a delegate to all three Round Table Conferences. On account of his liberal views he was appointed on various committees like Minorities Committee, Federal Finance Committee (1937); Public Accounts Committee (1933), etc.; served as Sheriff of Calcutta, 1934–35. knighted in 1935; member of the Courts of the Dacca of Aligarh Muslim Universities; president of Muslim Chamber of Commerce in 1939–40 and Indian Chamber of Commerce in 1945–46; for many years, he was the Chairman of India Steamship Company.

31. On the Muslim League: M.A. Jinnah to A.H. Ispahani, 20 April 1939

Z.A. Zaidi (ed.), *M.A. Jinnah–Ispahani Correspondence*, Karachi, 1976, pp. 128–29.

New Delhi
20 April 1939

Private & Confidential

My dear Hassan,

I have received your letter of 11 April, and I really do not know why you are annoyed. I really thought that it was not possible for me to follow the various complications mentioned in your letter, and I, therefore, gave you a very clear reply, and that was that. In my opinion, the time has come when there should be only one party and that is the Muslim League Party so far as the Muslims are concerned, and I cannot imagine of a coalition between the Muslim League Party and any other Muslim individual or group of Muslims or a party of Muslims, so far as the political life of the Muslims of India is concerned. How this is to be brought about in your province, and particularly in the Assembly, it is very difficult for me to advise.

With regard to 'the Madh-e-Sahaba row in Lucknow', I do not know what the Muslim League can do, as the disputants are led by Maulana Husain Ahmad on behalf of the Sunnis and Sir Wazir Hasan on behalf of the Shias, both prominent Congressmen, and the UP Govt is a Congress Government. Both these leaders are not only hostile, but inimical towards the Muslim League. Until the Shias and the Sunnis realize that they should appeal to the Muslim League to find a solution to this question, which after all is a controversy between the Muslims and a domestic matter for the Muslim to adjust, what move can the League make? Further, so long as the leaders of the movement do not approach the Muslim League Working Committee or the President, and

show any sign of giving us an idea that they would listen to our advice, (but, on the contrary, they are the strongest opponents of the League), may I know again what the League can do in the matter in the circumstances? I cannot see why any honest, true Muslim Leaguer should show his wrath against the Muslim League instead of against those who are responsible for the situation. Their answer to the mischief makers should be that we are not going to follow them, but appeal to both Shias and Sunnis to refer this matter to the Working Committee of the All India Muslim League.

I wonder whether you will be halting at Bombay in the first week of May. I hope you will let me know as I shall be glad to have you at lunch or dinner, whichever may suit you. I have to attend the Sholapur Conference, and may leave for Sholapur on 4 May for two or three days.

32. On the Bombay Provincial Muslim League Conference

Hindu, 8 May 1939.

8 May 1939

The speeches made at the Bombay Provincial Muslim League Conference have again demonstrated that the League's deliberations produces as a rule more heat than light. So far as Mr Jinnah is concerned, his mood of anger against the Congress has become so chronic that his reactions on such occasions are easily predictable. 'Every action of the Congress High Command, whether inside or outside the Legislatures was directed to crush and divide the Muslims,' was the burden of his song; but of this portentous charge he could think of no more convincing proof than the Bombay Municipal Amendment Act and the District Local Boards Act. The head and front of the Bombay Government's offending, in regard to the latter legislation, is that it favours joint electorates for the panchayat boards. But Mr Jinnah had not a word to say in condemnation of the Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act than which a more reactionarily communal measure it is not easy to think of.

It is a pity that even Sir Sikander Hyat Khan should be following in the footsteps of Mr Jinnah, apparently unable to realize that democracy and communalism are strange bed-fellows. Sir Sikander exhibits grave concern about the prevalence of the totalitarian mentality and methods in the Congress. This charge, into the merits of which we need not go just at present, would be more impressive if Sir Sikander did not himself reveal unconsciously perhaps, but nonetheless clearly, as leaning towards those very proclivities which he so vigorously condemns. His indignation against the Congress for its interference in the States—particularly Hyderabad—is boundless. But the Muslim League Conference under his lead felt no inconsistency about offering its 'full support for the vindication of the legitimate rights and interests' or the Muslims in Jaipur State who have fallen out with the State authorities. Sir Sikander professes sympathy with the Depressed Classes whose 'legitimate claim to be recognized as a distinct community with specific rights,' we are told, 'has been feverishly opposed by the very class which is responsible for their present plight, lest the present Hindu majority be thereby reduced to a minority,'—which explanation, by the way, offers a useful measure of the disinterestedness of Sir Sikander's sympathy for the Depressed Classes. But when it comes to explaining the fierce Shia-Sunni antagonisms in the UP, Mr Jinnah and the Muslim Conference have no difficulty in blaming it all on 'the surreptitious machinations of the enemies of Muslims to create and exploit the differences among them.'

It is part of the League policy to denounce the Congress Governments as working to perpetuate the tyranny of the majority. In support of this Sir Sikander Hyat Khan pointed to what he represents as refusal to give the minorities due representation in the Congress Ministries. And he contrasted

his own magnanimity in preferring to give the minorities, though he might have excluded them, representation in the Cabinet. 'The interests of my province and of the country as a whole demanded,' he said, 'that I should endeavour to accommodate all these important minority interests *which had a stake in the Province and were prepared to work with us.*' Precisely, the minorities in the Congress Provinces, particularly the Muslims, have been unwilling to subscribe to the condition indicated in the words we have italicized above, which Sir Sikander emphasizes as indispensable if the task of government is to be carried on successfully. For this it is the Muslim League itself that is to blame. In view of its persistent attempt to exalt loyalty to Muslim communalism above loyalty to the nation, it is remarkable that Sir Sikander does not see the irony of fulminating against the supposed Congress attempt 'to perpetuate the domination of a communal oligarchy.' Sir Sikander, who wanted his audience to 'remember that to a Muslim his religion, his culture and his self-respect are even dearer than his life,' might usefully remember that these things are equally dear to others though they may not care to make a song about it. But the question that all have to ask themselves earnestly is whether whole-hearted allegiance to the ideal of a strong and united nation need be incompatible with loyalty to one's religion and culture. We are glad to see Sir Sikander Hyat Khan insisting that only that kind of Federation would be acceptable to India, which secures her the unfettered right of rising to her full political stature. Enlightened sections of the Muslim community should have no difficulty in seeing that only a strong and united nation can achieve that stature, and neither strength nor unity can come from such fantastic plans far balkanizing India as the Muslim League is dallying with in the name of cultural and 'racial' autonomy.

33. Hallett to Linlithgow

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2187, NAI.

Government House, Ranchi
8 May 1939

This is with reference to your letter of 13th April 1939 about Muslim grievances. I deal with the Muslim League Conference, at Patna last Christmas in my fortnightly reports and you will doubtless refer, if necessary, to these reports.

3. It is convenient in the first place to deal with the 'Special Complaints of Muslims' as given in the annexure to your letter, the general complaints need a longer exposition of, the position:

(a) Trouble in villages of Muslim landlords with explicit object to harass them or hurt them financially and otherwise.

As far as this Province is concerned, this allegation is untrue. We have of course comparatively big Muslim landholders, but all the agrarian trouble which has occurred has been in the estates of Hindu landholders. I have little doubt that Sir Ziauddin Ahmad is thinking of Aligarh district; when I was in the United Provinces, I formed the opinion that conditions were particularly difficult there, because of the fact that most of the land holders were Muslims and the tenants Hindus.

(b) Rewards to Mahasabha Officers who have done injustice to Muslims by promotion:

This allegation also seem to me, after consulting my Chief Secretary, to be unfounded as far as this province is concerned. Both Executive and Police Officers seem to me to have done admirable work, with, on the whole, complete impartiality. My observations on the general grievances have some relevance to this point, but I feel that I can categorically deny that Mahasabha officers have been rewarded.

(c) Communal riots are started by Hindus. Investigations are often one-sided. Muslims are arrested in large numbers. Most recent case in Marehra (Etah):

This charge I also regard as unfounded, so far as far as Bihar is concerned, it appears to be based on a case in the United Provinces. It is true that in most communal riots Hindus are the aggressors, but I do not know of any case in which Government or the local officers have failed to take action against the aggressors. In the reply issued by the Bihar Government to the Muslim League Committee's allegations, of which a copy is enclosed, I would draw attention in particular to the cases mentioned under (d), (e), (f), (g), (h) and (i) on page 10 to 12, which show how Hindus have been prosecuted, for aggression. This of course does not prove the point that in some cases the non-aggressive Muslims have been prosecuted, but I feel confident that there has been no such cases.

(d) Forcing Hindi and non-Muslim culture on Muslims:

This of course refers to the Wardha scheme of education, but that has not progressed very far in this province, it is proposed to introduce only in one subdivision and I think, though I cannot quote chapter and verse, that the Ministers have said that the system will be non-sectarian. The allegation is too vague to admit of a more detailed reply.

(e) Wasting enormous sums of money in self-propaganda in the name of village uplift and employing only non-Muslims

I am prepared to admit waste of money, and possibly the use of government money for party propaganda, but Muslims have been recruited to the village uplift staff.

(f) Unfair enquiries in the case of Muslim officers:

Neither I nor my Chief Minister know of any such cases. In cases in which the Ministry has taken possibly unjustifiable action against an officer, the sufferer has been a Hindu.

(g) Central Provinces and Bihar have no Muslim Ministers:

This is of course rubbish; I have a perfectly good Muslim Minister in Dr Mahmud; no doubt he, like all Congress Muslims, does not carry weight with his community, but that cannot be avoided, unless we have coalition Ministries.

(h) Muslims do not get a fair share in public appointments under Government and local bodies:

The statement on pages 1-3 of the Bihar Government reply to the Muslim League's allegations shows that Muslims have got more than their share of appointments. Of course the statement may not be entirely complete, but as far as my experience goes, in the case of appointments made direct by Government, the Ministers have, if anything, gone out of their way to see that Muslims secure posts.

As regards appointments under local bodies, I have no information, but when I was in the United Provinces I was told frequently that in local bodies appointments were made on purely communal considerations, which meant that the Hindus got them. The question of representation on local bodies is different. In this Province we have joint electorates and the Muslim League have made the position more difficult by refusing to contest the elections. This matter is dealt with fully in the Part III of the Reply to Muslim League Allegations and I presume the facts are correct.

4. I now turn to the General Allegations

(a) Dual system of administration and (b) and (c) interference in the work of the executive, judiciary and the reversal of High Court decisions:

The points may be considered together. As a minor point, I may note there are no indications of attempts to interfere with the higher judiciary or to reverse decisions of High Court. Recently however the Chief Justice received a letter from a Congress leader in a district referring to a case which was sub-judice, though the attempt to influence the Chief Justice was not very serious. The

Chief Justice rightly made a public statement on the matter and pointed out how objectionable such attempts were and stated that in future serious notice would be taken of any such action. We have had no cases of contempt of court; it is indeed regrettable that no such cases have come before the High Court; for had they done so, we should have had some healthy decisions such as those of the Allahabad High Court. I understand that orders were issued some time ago that cases of contempt should not be referred by a Magistrate to a High Court without consulting the Government. This has no doubt deterred Magistrates from reporting such cases.

One matter in which there has been interference with local officers is in regard to the withdrawal of prosecutions. My Chief Secretary reports that this has been the regular sequel to every strike and there has been a number of cases in which the Prime Minister has been approached by parties to criminal cases and has ordered withdrawal against the advice of the local officers and Chief Secretary. I presume he refers to prosecutions instituted after a strike or after agrarian or communal disturbances. In the case of communal disturbances several minor cases, both against Hindus and Muhammadans, were withdrawn after the communal riots at Bhagalpur in July and August last, though the major cases were tried out; cases were also withdrawn in Gaya after a disturbance following a flag hoisting ceremony in a school. In the case of strikes, many of the cases were for disobedience of orders under Section 144 CrPC, or other technical offences.

It is satisfactory that the Prime Minister has not agreed to the withdrawal of any cases in which attacks have been made on the police and as far as I am aware, most of the cases withdrawn have been for rather technical offences. The Prime Minister has discussed some of these cases with me and the problem is by no means easy. If a compromise or a settlement has been arrived at between the parties, whether between employers and workers or between Hindus and Muslims or between landlords and tenants, it can plausibly be argued that prosecutions will only prolong the tension and in cases in which a compromise has been effected by the local people themselves, it nearly always contains a recommendation that prosecution should be dropped. The withdrawals in Gaya were ordered on the suggestion of a local Peace Committee. In the case of strikes the employers have in most cases I think agreed to the withdrawal; in the case of communal disturbances in which both sides were to blame, the withdrawal of minor cases against both Hindus and Muslims is not wholly unjustifiable. The policy of withdrawing cases after a settlement is by no means peculiar to this Province and was at times adopted by pre-reform Governments. On the other hand, as I have pointed out to the Prime Minister, it is necessary to consider the effect of these withdrawals on others; if the idea becomes prevalent that no one will be punished for participating in a riot or defying lawful orders, it discourages lawful orders, it encourages lawlessness. The withdrawal of prosecutions is merely one incident in the general policy of Congress Government to rule by conciliation rather than by a show of force. Possibly this somewhat violent opposition to which Congress leaders have been exposed in Calcutta and elsewhere may make even a Congress Government realize that their policy is not wise.

Much of what has been said in my letter No. 515-G.8. of 14 April 1939 about 'Service Morals', and in the enclosures thereto, has some bearing on this question of interference as I have pointed out in that and other letters, the fact that Government have no settled policy in law and order matters, and that their reluctance to take responsibility makes the position of District Officers difficult; they are diffident of taking action. I am told that the District Officer told the Chief Secretary that his most important work was trying to persuade the officers under him that they would get support if they acted as they thought they ought to do. Considering the difficulties of their position, I think District Officers and their subordinate have done extremely well in dealing with communal and other disturbances. But their action may and indeed frequently is the subject of questions in the Legislature which it is impossible to restrain. I see most of the replies to these

questions before they are given and I must admit that they are usually appropriate and reasonable. But I have an uneasy feeling in my mind that these replies are neither appreciated, nor carry conviction. The Prime Minister is still very suspicious of the Services—this is proved by his frequent complaint of lack of co-operation—and tends to believe complaints against Police Officers rather than their defence; hence there is always a risk that in spite of his spoken words he will attempt to do an officer down by a transfer or some other means.

In districts there are no signs of any further attempts to set up parallel courts or police station, but there is no doubt that Congress leaders do interest themselves in cases and do try to influence Police officers or Magistrates. There is really nothing new in this. In the old days in Bihar the Indigo Planters had much influence over the local sub-inspector of Police; in more recent days the landowners always tried to keep on the right side of the District Magistrate. The difference between those days and the present time is that in the past government was on the whole impartial, now there is always the suspicion that political motives and the fear of alienating possible supporters will influence their decisions. It is to some extent the inevitable result of the introduction of a system of responsible governments.

(c) Financial irregularities:

Loss of income under:

- (i) Land Revenue
- (ii) Excise
- (iii) Water Rate

The loss of revenue under these heads is about 30% of the total income. It leads to budgetary difficulties and the Government are now imposing new taxation of the nature of double taxation—Employment Tax and Petrol Tax.

This allegation appears to refer primarily to the United Provinces; in Bihar we have had little reduction in the Land Revenue demand. This is due to the fact of the Permanent Settlement. The only reduction that has occurred is in the rent of government estates. There has been some reduction in Canal rates, but the total income under this head is so small that the reduction has no effect on the budgetary position. In regard to Excise, the Provincial Government are also going slowly; the total income in the year 1937–38 was about Rs 1,19,000 in each of the years 1938–39 and 1939–40 the reduction on account of Prohibition has been taken at about 10 lakhs or slightly more; part of this loss has been made up by higher receipts in non-dry areas.

The Provincial Budget still shows a small surplus, as such taxes as have been imposed: (Amusement Tax on Agricultural Income, Increased stamp duties) are not of the nature of double taxation. A Petrol Tax is now being considered by the Legislature and to that tax, I see no objection though the position is at present not wholly unsatisfactory. I recognized that it may deteriorate during the current year, partly owing to the difficulty over prohibition and partly owing to the difficulty over rent collection; there is also the risk that next year Government may extend prohibition to a much larger area.

(d) Dislocation of law and order in villages

Crime statistics are the best indication of the position in regard to crime. I quote some figures from the last two quarterly statements which are available to me. In the quarter ending September 30th, dacoity and robbery were below the triennial average for the same period; but in the next quarter, dacoity was 35% and robbery 8% above the triennial average. The increase in dacoity was confined to North Bihar, always more liable to this form of crime than other parts of the Province, in fact the increase was mainly due to the large number of cases which occurred in Saran district, said to be partly due to an invasion of criminals from the adjacent district of Gorakhpur. I am satisfied that the police, though handicapped by the fact that the dacoity reserve

has had to be employed to keep the peace in areas in which communal or agrarian disturbances have occurred, have not allowed the situation to get out of control.

Figures from the less serious crime of burglary and theft are in some respects a better indication of the growth of lawlessness. In the last two quarters, burglary increased by 11% in each quarter; theft has increased by 10 and 26.9% as compared with the triennial average. In some districts this increase is attributed to labour trouble. It is somewhat significant that those districts where communal and agrarian trouble has been worst, e.g., Gaya, Monghyr, Patna, show little or no trouble. On the whole the increase is not as serious as might have been anticipated, but I cannot refrain from quoting an observation made by the Deputy Inspector-General (Criminal Investigation Department) on one of these quarterly returns. But possibly the most important factor responsible for the recent rise in crime has been the growing spirit of lawlessness due to political agitation. The police having invariably been the target of attacks have lost a good deal of their influence over criminals. The public having been continually told not to fear the police, the criminal classes now believe that with a popular Government the police have been rendered powerless. There is a good deal of truth in this; we can only hope that the situation will gradually improve. Cases of rioting of course shown marked increase, 33% in the quarter ending September 30th and 14% in the subsequent quarters. There has been no indication that Muslims have suffered more than others from this increase in crime.

(f) Corruption:

There are of course rumours of corruption but no proof whatever is available. I have some difficulty in getting more reasonable information, and recent appointments to the provincial services were generally in accordance with the commissions recommendations.

(g) Forcible suppression of freedom of speech

There is not the least ground for this allegation; on the contrary there is far too much liberty of speech. No attempt has been made to interfere with speeches, though there is more sedition and abuse of the Ministry than before. It was with some reluctance that Prime Minister agreed to reports of speeches being obtained; but even though the speeches of Kisan agitators are reported, no action has been taken against them and the policy of government is to go for small fry.

Muslim papers such as the *Star of India* in Calcutta and the *Star of Allahabad* publish very distorted accounts of incidents in this province and have done so ever since the Congress Government assumed office. As regards the former, the Government of Bengal have been addressed and asked to restrain this paper.

The Prime Minister has shown himself very suspicious of speeches delivered by Adibasi leaders in Chota Nagpur, in my view without just cause, he regards this movement as dangerous, but as I have already reported, there is a risk that Government action or the action of local Congress workers will revive the aboriginal's innate dislike of the Hindu. It is possible that the Adibasi will combine with the Muslim against Congress.

5. I now attempt the difficult task drawing some general conclusions from the facts which I have reported and the even more difficult task of making suggestions as to the action to be taken to reassure the Muslims.

My general conclusions are:

(a) There is no reason to hold that the Congress Government in this province have taken any action hostile to Muslim interests: they have been more than fair in the matter of appointments, and have shown themselves very nervous of offending the Muslims.

(b) The Muslim League represents mainly the upper class Muslims and the intelligentsia. There is also the so called Momin community; that originally consisted of those classes whose hereditary trade was weaving, but the term has now been extended to include those classes which

might generally be called peasants and workers. There has undoubtedly, been a struggle between Congress and the League to win over this class who form the great majority of the Muslim voters. The general Congress policy of helping peasants and workers benefits this class of Muslims; Congress also started a Muslim Mass Contact movement; and the Congress Government in Bihar have taken some special steps to help Momins, e.g., grant of scholarships, & etc. I cannot help thinking, though I have no direct proof, that the League, realizing that the Momins might be won over, and realizing also that all Muslims are at heart fanatics, have raised and emphasized religious questions.

(c) There is no doubt that in nearly all the riots which occurred, the Hindus have been the aggressors. There is no doubt also that this aggressive attitude of the Hindus has been encouraged by the belief that a Congress Government which is predominantly Hindu will treat them highly. In fact many Muslims, with whom I have discussed the position, have urged this point, though they admit their inability to bring any charges of anti-Muslim prejudice against Government.

(d) But though Hindus may have been encouraged to become aggressive for these reasons, the Muslims are by no means blameless. Their press by publishing distorted accounts of incidents have increased communal feeling. Very shortly after my present Government took office, the *Star of India* made allegations against them for incidents which occurred during the time of the Interim Ministry and I brought this very unfair attack to the notice of His Excellency the Governor of Bengal. More recently my Government addressed the Government of Bengal, bringing to their notice some inaccurate reports published in this paper.

Apart from this, some of the speeches delivered during the League Session at Patna were provocative, though I gratefully recognize that leaders such as Sir Sikander Hyat Khan did much to tone down the extremists.

(e) Political rivalry between Hindus and Muslims gave to communal tension after the reforms of 1919 were introduced; it is hardly surprising that the introduction of far wider reforms has created an even more difficult position.

(f) Muslims probably regard the safeguards as ineffective, and consider that Governors in the Congress Provinces should have exercised their special responsibilities. No Muslim leader has ever represented this point to me and as I have shown, my Congress Government have not taken any action hostile to the minority.

(g) The allegations made against Congress Government by gentlemen such as Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad, Mr Jinnah, the Nawab of Chhatari, Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, Sir Muhammad Yakub and others, all of whom have some experience of efficient administration, are in my view very largely inspired by a realization of the fact that Congress Governments are inefficient. Many others, Hindu Liberals Europeans; Government servants and others, also recognize this inefficiency.

I need not stress the inefficiency of my team of four Ministers.

6. I am afraid that I find myself at a loss to suggest what action should be taken to improve the position. A cynic or a die-hand might say 'scrap the Constitutional and recognize frankly that India is not fit for democracy.' A defeatist might say 'call a Constituent Assembly and let Congress have a straight fight with the League and its other opponents.'

7. I hope to meet Wylie this week and possibly a discussion with him may enable me to be more helpful.

PSV

This is a careful and very interesting report and commentary.

(Linlithgow's Comments)



34. Federation, Muslim League and Congress: Jinnah's Apprehensions

Hindustan Times, 8 May 1939.

8 May 1939

A stern warning to the British Government that they would be making a very great mistake if they thought that they could settle the Federation issue with the Congress, leaving out the Muslim League, was given by M.A. Jinnah, president of the All India Muslim League, inaugurating the Bombay Provincial Muslim League Conference (at Sholapur) last night. He declared that in such a case the Muslim League would fight Federation alone and make it impossible.

In this connection, Jinnah pointed out that the Muslims were prepared for greater sacrifices, as he had a feeling that the Congress would ultimately join Federation. It was curious, he stated, that Gandhi had not uttered a word about Federation in recent months, which was a significant fact. Jinnah reiterated the Muslim League policy vis-a-vis the Indian States as one of non-intervention....

Jinnah traced at length the history of the recent growth of the Muslim League organization and expressed gratification at its present strength. He stated that it had been proved that the Congress High Command did not want the Muslims to collaborate or co-operate with them as their equals and partners; they wanted the Muslims to be their henchmen. Every action of the Congress High Command, whether inside or outside the legislatures, was directed to crush and divide the Muslims. Jinnah cited the instances at the Bombay Municipal Amendment Act and the District Local Boards Act, which he said, were deliberately enacted to injure the Muslim interests.

Referring to the Rajkot affairs, Jinnah said that it had proved his worst apprehension that Gandhi wanted the Muslims to play as his henchmen which they would never do. Jinnah severely criticized Gandhi's proposal of conditional representation of the Muslims on the Reforms Committee and said: 'It is a proposal which I would feel ashamed to offer to the Hindus.' Jinnah concluded with the advice: 'In difficulties do not despair, in victory do not lose your head.'...

35. The Muslim League Deputation

Editorial, *Tribune*, 12 May 1939. See also Saifuddin Kitchlew to Rajendra Prasad, 21 May 1939, Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 3, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, p. 85.

12 May 1939

The Muslim League deputation arrived at Lahore on Wednesday. We now know on the authority of its accredited leader and spokesman the real purpose of the tour which has been undertaken by this deputation. That purpose is 'to strengthen the Unionist Ministry in the Punjab and to bring the Frontier Province and Sind within the League fold.' 'The deputation,' said this gentleman, 'would try to bring home to the Muslims that even though they enjoyed a majority in the Punjab, Sind and the Frontier Province, Congress rule in these provinces would mean the rule of the Congress High Command; in other words the rule of the Hindu majority.' Hitherto, to be more precise, until some months ago, the position of Jinnah and the Muslim League was that they had no quarrel with the Hindus as a community and that their only quarrel was with the Congress. Now the cat is out of the bag. Their quarrel with the Congress itself, we are told by the deputation, is due solely to the fact that the Congress has a Hindu majority. In other words their quarrel is with the Hindu community itself. This is brought out in a still more unmistakable manner by the statement of the leader of the deputation that all the several constitutional schemes that are at present under consideration by the League are governed by the common principle that the Muslims

should decline to live under a Hindu majority. The principle of all these schemes, therefore, is the principle of the Latif Scheme, namely, the division of India into separate communal zones by the transfer of Muslim populations from Hindu provinces and States and vice-versa. Besides, being utterly fantastic, this idea of building the state on a homogeneous communal basis is essentially anti-modern and goes against the root-principle of nationality, as the world has understood it these two centuries.

But our present concern is not so much with the fanatic or the medieval nature of the schemes, as with the immense mischief which they are bound to do in actual practice by promoting communal discord and disharmony. We have not the slightest objection to the deputation doing everything that it can legitimately do to strengthen the Sikander Ministry, but it must be clear to the meanest understanding that any attempt to promote this object by maligning the Congress Governments, on the express ground of their being Hindu Governments, is bound materially to accentuate the existing communal ill-feeling in the Punjab. If it has become a matter of principle with the Muslim Leaguers today that the Muslims should not live in provinces in which the Hindus are in a majority, it is possible for them to proclaim this fact from one central platform and then see what response they receive from the bulk of their co-religionists. It would be a very different thing and would be a positive source of danger for them to go from village to village and from town to town and preach this sinister doctrine of separatism and enforce their preaching by drawing an imaginary picture of the oppressions, injustices and tyrannies practised by Hindu majorities. We put it to Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, who, we believe, still retains a part of the political wisdom that enabled him to deal in a statesmanlike manner with the Shahidganj trouble, that in the best interests of his own Government, no less than of the cause of that Hindu Muslim unity which he is never weary of professing to have at heart, he cannot and ought not to permit this deputation to proceed on its career of mischief. If they are not utterly bankrupt of statesmanship, they should put their foot down immediately and stop the mischief at its source. Prevention here as elsewhere is immeasurably better than cure.

36. Congress Muslims' Decision

Searchlight, 17 May 1939.

Patna
15 May 1939

A meeting of the Congress Muslims of Bihar was held at Moradpore, Patna on 12 May 1939, under the presidentship of Mr Wali Hassan. The following resolutions were discussed and passed unanimously:

(1) This meeting records its heartfelt sympathy for those who have been injured in the recent communal riot at Gaya and expresses its deep sense of sorrow for the bereaved families. Further it urges upon the Bihar Government to take necessary steps immediately to punish the miscreants and offenders and compensate the innocent sufferers.

(2) This meeting resolves that, in order to counteract the poisonous, malicious and mischievous propaganda carried on by anti-national press, an Urdu bi-weekly newspaper be started soon; and in this connection appoints a Committee consisting of Messrs Ahmad Ghafoor, MLA, Hafiz Md. Sani, MLA, Shah Md. Umair, MLC, Wali Hasan, Dr Naseem Gorganwi and Nematullah to meet Dr Rajendra Prasad, Congress President, and present before him a detailed scheme.

(3) This meeting urges upon the Bihar Government to take special care at the time of the nominations for the district boards so that proper and adequate representation should be given to Mussalmans.

37. Communal Politics

Rajendra Prasad Papers, 1929, File No. 3-P/39, NAI.

*Provincial Congress Committee
Bradlaugh Hall
Lahore
21 May 1939*

To
Rastrapati Rajendra Prasad,
Sadaqat Ashram,
Patna.

My dear Rajendra Babu,

I am writing these lines to draw your attention to a very serious problem that is agitating the minds of our workers in this province and which I think is worrying the workers in other provinces also. You know a deputation of the Muslim League is touring our province these days. Wherever the members of the deputation go they make provocative speeches inciting Muslims against the Congress by relating baseless stories and so called atrocities committed on Muslims by the Congress governments. I do not know how far the deputation will succeed in its attempts to vilify the congress, but it is bound to create some misunderstandings against the Congress, and therefore we must do something to counteract it. I suggest that a counter deputation of prominent Muslims from Congress provinces should tour non-Congress provinces. Members of the deputation should be intelligent and learned people who can create an impression on the masses. If you can arrange to send such a deputation, it will prove to be of great help to us. I am sure Provincial Congress Committees of Congress provinces can help us by giving two or three persons from each province. I would request you to move into the matter at your earliest convenience as we are anxious that such a deputation should come as soon as possible.

I hope you are keeping quite fit.

Yours sincerely,

President, Punjab Provincial Congress Comm., Lahore.

PS

In case you cannot arrange such a deputation, have you any objection to my corresponding with the Provincial Congress Committees directly.

38. The Communal Question: The Viceroy's Reflections, Linlithgow to Hallett, 10 June 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2187, NAI.

I have been rather hard pressed during the last few days, or I would have written earlier to thank you for your most interesting letter of 27th May, No. 725-G.B., covering your report for the second half of April and the first half of May. I note the further increase in communal tension and I continue to be uneasy on this question, as indeed we must all of us be who see the dangerous possibilities implicit in the increasing activity of the extremest elements on both sides. I cannot help feeling that the Gaya riots, profoundly unsatisfactory as they were, must have had a healthy effect on the attitude of your Ministers, for they cannot, honestly, with any conviction tell themselves that they had not had all possible warnings, or feel that the way in which things have gone is not a most significant indication of the amount of dry powder which is lying about. It is in a sense

satisfactory that the blame should not be attributable exclusively to either party. But the mere fact that both parties should have been to blame to the extent that they were further indicates the dangerous potentialities of the situation.

2. I think I might mention that I have had some further discussion in our private correspondence with Zetland on the communal question and the general Muslim attitude.¹ He will be now have had your most valuable comments on Ziauddin's allegations; but he has mentioned that, while he himself never found it easy to find specific instances of hardships inflicted on minority communities in Congress Provinces, the suggestion had been made to him that the real trouble lay in the matter of jobs; that it was said that 'tame' Muslims get all the appointments secured to the community by the fixed quotas, and that it is easy to understand, if this were so, it would be more infuriating to the 'good' Muslim than the appointment of a Hindu. On the other hand, it was easy to see that the more belligerent was the Muslim community, the greater would be the temptation of the Government to put in 'tame' Muslims. He asked me whether I thought it would at all strengthen the hands of Governors were I to authorize a message from myself about the dangers of stimulating communal tension by the inequitable distribution of appointments, which would make it clear that I would not regard myself as stopped from using my responsibility for minorities by the fact that particular sections of a minority had no cause of complaint. I said to Zetland that I would, of course, myself gladly consult the Governors principally concerned on this suggestions, but that my first reaction was one of doubt, for my feeling was that Governors are already fully alive to the position and that they could be relied upon, when they think they could intervene to any purpose to do so. I noted, also that I was myself sceptical as to whether the added weight of the Governor-General's name (unless, which I do not think was the case, the Governor-General were to be in a position to bring some really effective pressure of his own to bear) would make such difference, and I mentioned that I knew he appreciated I was not anxious to come in or threaten in a matter of this character, unless I could be quite sure that by coming in I could produce some effect and should be ready to go through at whatever cost with whatever threats I might use. But that I quite recognized that I might be taking rather too narrow a view, and that I readily suspended judgment until I knew what the Governors concerned felt on the subject. I would greatly welcome your comments.

9. The Mahatma's new technique for dealing with states is not, I would judge, on the whole unsatisfactory and I hope that there may be a slight lull as far as Congress agitation and that corner of the field is concerned. I continue to be impressed by the tribute to Gandhi's personality and influence which is constituted by the ease with which he has got away, first, with his recantation over Rajkot and, secondly, with his new technique of non-violence, so far as the states are concerned, which cannot, I suspect, be wholly welcome to a great many of his supporters.

¹ See, for example, Zetland to Linlithgow, 27 June 1939, Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI.

39. Muslim League Meeting at Jharia

Searchlight, 13 June 1939.

Jharia
9 June 1939

Mr S. Sharfuddin Ahmad, Mukhtar of Jharia wires:

A few days back the Muslim Leaguers of Dhanbad held a mass meeting but they could do so only under the disguise of the Sirat-ul Nabi. Speeches were delivered against the Congress and the

Jamia students of Delhi; Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was made the chief target of their attack. All kinds of insinuations were made against him; even his insight into the Holy Quran was questioned by one Ghiyasuddin who is said to be a member of the Working Committee of the Provincial Muslim League, Bihar.

Khan Bahadur Zakaria Hashmi condemned the activities of the Congress and the Jamiyat al-ulama and exhorted the audience to completely eradicate the germs (sic) of patriotism preached by them as the very idea stood against the teaching of the Holy Quran.

The Imam of the local Jama mosque, who was deputed by the Imarat-i Sharia, Phulwari Sharif, about sixteen years back and was held in high veneration by the Muslims in general, was openly abused and practically turned out of his office because he favours the Jamiyat al-ulama, the Congress and had refused to accept the vice-presidentship of the Muslim League. In short, party feelings are very tense and discontent prevails among the rank and file of the Muslims who support the viewpoints of the Jamiyat al-ulama and the Congress.

40. 'Congress-League Entente'

Editorial, *Behar Herald*, 13 June 1939.

13 June 1939

Who says that the Congress and the Muslim League are like Kipling's East and West that can never meet? I vouch that the differences between the two organizations which were said to have been discovered during the Jinnah-Bose or rather Gandhi-Jinnah negotiations last year, have been made up to the satisfaction of both the Parties. If any difference is talked about in the Press it is done as a matter of form. If the naked eye now and then at all notices any differences, it is only the appearance on the surface. Deep down below the surface appearances there is the reality—solid as marble undeniable as death. That reality is that the Congress and the Muslim League have become one in spirit. They see alike, they do alike and they think alike under the inspiration of common experiences and the inexorable dictation of the primeval instinct of self-preservation. If you have any doubt about my statement, just go through the proceedings of the Home Ministers Conference held a few days ago at Shimla, especially the resolution that was adopted after prolonged deliberations. It is well known that in that conference were represented not only the governments of the Congress provinces but also the governments of what may appropriately be described as Muslim League provinces, such as Bengal and the Punjab.

There the Khaddar *Kurta* was arranged in line with the Sherwani made of the finest Lancashire fabric and the Gandhi cap found conspicuous prominence in contrast to the scarlet-red fez of the Turkey of the pre-Kamal [Pasha] days.... Yet the outcome of their deliberations was a unanimous resolution laying down the principles of the administration of law and order. Could unanimity be reached by those who stand apart like Kipling's East and West? Could there have been unanimity of opinion if there was no essential unity of ideology deep down at the bottom? An answer is uncalled for...

41. On Communal Controversies: Zetland to Linlithgow, 6 June 1939

Zetland Papers Acc. No. 1969, NAI. See also, Zetland to Linlithgow, 27 June 1939.

[Extract]

4. To turn now to your letter of May the 19th, I have read without surprise what you say in paragraph 7 as to the difficulty of doing anything effective to dispel the malaise of the Muslims

living in Congress Provinces. I fully appreciate indeed the immense difficulty, for the failure of the Governors to discover on investigation any real substance for the complaints which have been made shows that the trouble is to a large extent caused by the attitude of the minds of Hindus which displays itself in such comparatively trifling manifestations as the singing of the Hindu national song, *Bande Mataram*; and there is no means by which we can alter this, for the gulf between the two communities is, as you say, fundamental. Incidentally, I am a little disturbed at the somewhat different example of this eternal communal problem which is at the moment presenting itself in Bengal. I have within the last week or ten days received strong representations from a number of Bengali Hindus protesting against a statutory or at least quasi-statutory provision for securing to the Muslims a majority in the provincial services and appealing to the obligation which rests upon the Governors to protect the legitimate interests of the minorities. I do not know yet what line Reid is proposing to take, though I see that he received a deputation from the Hindus a few days ago. I presume that I shall be hearing from you on this in the near future.

5. I have, I need hardly say, read with great interest what you say in paragraph 8 of your letter concerning Muslims opposition to Federation. I fully agree, of course, that there is nothing new in the apprehensions which the Muslims feel in face of the prospect of what they describe as a Hindu Raj. What seems to me, however, to be a new factor is the extent to which the Muslims are uniting on the issue under the banner of the All India Muslim League and this in its turn seems to me to be the outcome of the experience so far gained of the actual working of the autonomy in the provinces. There is I must admit some foundation for the view which the Muslims clearly now take, that effective intervention by the Governors in pursuance of their special responsibilities can only be expected occasionally and in exceptional cases, and that the natural tendency of the Governors is to argue that his special responsibility is not affected by the particular action on the part of his Ministers rather than look for reasons suggesting that it is. A further factor which was not, I think, present in our minds either at the time of the Round Table Conferences or during the sitting of the Joint Select Committee, is the growing prospect of a considerable accession of strength to the Congress Party in the Federation as a result of their attack upon the Indian States. The cumulative effect of these things seems to me to have been to add very greatly to Muslim fears and consequently to increase their opposition to the Federal provisions of the Act. It is a considerable relief to me, therefore, to know that you do not think that the Muslims have it in their power either to prevent attainment of Federation or to make it unworkable, unless, of course, they can find means to prevent sufficient number of Princes for acceding. I will not say more here as to the policy to be pursued in that event, since I touched upon it in my letter of May the 22nd and dealt with it more fully in my letter of last week. I wholly agree with you that we should not weaken in our determination to bring the Federation into existence. Unfortunately, it is the Princes and not ourselves who have the determining voice in the matter, and it is because I have been very conscious for some time past of the extraordinary difficulty of the situation in which we shall find ourselves if the Princes do reject our offer that I had been trying to explore the possibilities which will present themselves to us in that unhappy event. Let us hope that my fears of a setback at the hands of the Princes will prove to be unfounded.

42. Hallett to Linlithgow

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2187, NAI.

15 June 1939

I am as usual most grateful for your comments of my last report and for your letter of June 10th, 1939. I hasten to give my comments on the very interesting suggestions made by Lord Zetland

about the communal situation, but before I deal specially with these suggestions, there are I feel some general observations which I should put forward for what they are worth by way of a prelude. Possibly I may be repeating views which I have already given, but as they have some bearing on the present question, they may be relevant.

2. There is without doubt a feeling among Muhammadans, especially the Muhammadan intelligentsia from which primarily the Muslim League is formed, that Congress is a purely Hindu organization and that a Congress Government means a Hindu Raj. In this province also a similar feeling prevails among the aboriginals, and that is one of the main reasons for the development of the Adibasi movement. There is also a somewhat similar feeling among Hindus, and though I cannot claim to know anything of conditions in Bengal, I know from conversations with my Bengali friends in this province that they feel that not merely are they not getting a fair deal in this province, owing to the Bengali-Bihari controversy, but also that they are not getting a fair deal in Bengal, under a Muslim Ministry. The recent discussions in the Bengal Cabinet about the problem of representation in the services seem to me to show how apprehensive the Bengali Hindus are.

3. Such being the views of the minority communities, it is desirable to try and give an appreciation of the Congress view. My Prime Minister certainly regards the activities of the Muslim League and of the Adibasi Sabha as 'Communalism'; he has actually used this expression in regard to the activities of the latter organization. What he means by 'Communalism' is a little obscure, but I presume that both he and other Congress leaders feel very strongly that 'Communalism' is antagonistic to 'nationalism' and that, if India is spilt up into communal or regional groups, the chances of obtaining independence for India are lessened. His opposition to these movements which he perceives as communal, is thus not surprising; it is based on the recognition of a very obvious fact which was fully appreciated by all who had anything to do with the framing of the new constitution.

4. There is also of course at the back of the minds of all Congress leaders the belief that Congress is the only effective political organization in India; this belief is possibly even more strongly felt by the Congress rank and file. There is considerable justification for this belief; Congress, thanks to their effective organization, swept the polls at the general elections before the new constitution started and in this province also have been on the whole very successful in the recent District Board elections, inspite of a certain amount of opposition. Congress also have never lost sight of the fact that the final result of the civil disobedience movement was a victory for the Mahatma; or certainly not a defeat. As a result of these triumphs, they have become extremely intolerant of any opposition, whether from their own left-wing or from organizations such as the Muslim League. All Congress leaders seem to me to be Fascist in their mentality; they would be prepared to take any steps, fair or foul, to defeat opposition.

5. But when they are faced with the Muslim opposition they recognize that they are up against a more difficult problem due to the fact that in certain parts of India Muslims are in a majority and that that majority will support the Muslim minority in other parts. It is largely in view of this that they feel the necessity of placating or at least of not alienating the Muslims and, as I hope I have shown in my general report on this question, my government have been careful to avoid any action which would antagonize Muslim feeling. But my Ministers see clearly that in a province such as Bihar there are two classes. They will of course unite if the cry is raised that an attack is being made on their religion and that is one of the real danger of the Muslim League propaganda but if religion is left out of the account, the Muslim community, like all other communities, is divided into an upper and lower class. There is no doubt that Congress hope to win over the lower class; they cannot hope to win over the upper class, but they hope at least to avoid antagonizing them: here in Bihar we have the problem of the so-called Momins. A few years ago I would have said

that a Momin was a Muslim weaver, but now the term seems to be used to include any Muslim of the lower classes. The word actually merely means a 'believer' so there is no great difficulty in any Muslim calling himself a 'Momin'. The Momin community, in view of this new definition, is very large in numbers; except in religious matters, its interests are the same as those of the lower caste Hindus, and any measure designed to benefit the cultivator, the landless labourer or the artisan, will benefit them. Congress I feel recognize that, if this large section of the Muslims can be won over to their side, they will cause a split in the Muslim opposition, and I think there is no doubt that any Congress Ministry are doing what they can to win over this numerically large community.

6. After this very long prelude, I come down to the point raised by Lord Zetland that the Muslim opposition is due partly to the fact that 'tame' Muslim rather than 'good' Muslims get jobs. I do not wish to minimize the very important bearing which the distribution of jobs or of the 'loaves and fishes' has on political feeling, especially in India where the idea still prevails that a post under government is the one thing to be secured. But this point must not be over-emphasized, and that is my excuse for my long prelude on the general communal situation.

11. I now pass on to Lord Zetland's suggestion as to possible action. I fully share your doubts as to the advisability of adopting these suggestions. If your Excellency made any statement about the danger of stimulating communal tension by the inequitable distribution of appointment, Congress would at once cry out that their appointments were not inequitable and it would, as I tried to show in the earlier part of this letter, be difficult to show that they were. They might even go so far as to attack the Muslim Government in Bengal and the Punjab and to contend that it was their appointments which were inequitable. This would increase communal tension.

13. I have started this letter with trying to give an appreciation of the reasons for the present tension between the two communities and I will close it by repeating my view that it is largely due to political jealousy. If Congress would take into their Ministries representatives of the Muslim League, the situation might be improved, but it is very unlikely that they ever will do so. I feel that in this matter we must stand aside; we must see that no grave injustice is done to the Muslims either in the matter of appointments or in other matter, but we cannot take, as far as I can see, any more positive action to improve their relations. Anything we might do might be misinterpreted; our critics will go back to the old cry that our policy in Divide *at impera* and our intervention might make the whole position more difficult.

I apologize for the length of my comments on the point which Your Excellency and Lord Zetland have raised.

43. Muslims and Federation: Haig to Linlithgow, 1 July 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

[Secret]

No. UP 282

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

In your Excellency's letter, dated 10 June 1939, you asked for my views generally about the attitude of the Muslims towards Federation. I have taken a little time to reply, because it is a matter on which I myself feel somewhat uncertain, and I have tried in the interval to clear my ideas by conversation with such Muslims as I have been meeting. But even now I feel that there is a considerable element of speculation in the views I express.

2. The first question I put to myself is, whether the Muslims have any fundamental objection to Federation, and that question can be viewed in two aspects:

(a) Federation as a further step in the process of self-government for India,

- (b) Federation as a detailed scheme in which there are certain obvious disadvantages for the Muslim community.

3. These two aspects really represent an essential antinomy in the Muslim position. As Indians the Muslims want a greater degree of power and self-government. They do not wish to be governed by a foreign race. On the other hand, as a communal minority they know that their interests and their authority in the country depend to a large extent on the support of the British and that it is to their interest to back up the British so long as the British are likely to exercise an effective restraining influence on the power of the Hindu majority. In practice the Muslims seem to have reacted to these conflicting considerations by expressing, even with some vehemence, a theoretical demand for wider self-governing powers for Indians, coupled with a practical lack of enthusiasm for extensive political changes. It would not be unnatural therefore if the Muslims combined these two positions by opposing Federation, not on principle or in respect of the wider powers it confers, but on the grounds of its practical disadvantages to the Muslim community.

4. I think this is probably the basis of the Muslim position. It is a tactical attitude resting on what they conceive to be the interests of the community. It is not an attitude that is likely to lead them into very strong or fervent opposition to Federation as such, but is likely to involve rather the putting forward of certain tactical demands as the price of their consent. There is of course the possibility that certain demands might be evolved which would be regarded as a sort of charter of Muslim security and would in that light develop into a serious battle cry. But it might in practice prove very difficult for Muslims to reach agreement about such demands.

5. Still viewing the matter as one primarily of Muslim tactics, there is the question as between an all-India Federation and a British India Federation. So far as I can judge at the present moment these federal issues are left very largely in the hands of Jinnah. I have been told that when Jinnah attacked Sikander Hayat for his speech pledging the support of the Punjab in the event of war, Sikander reacted very strongly and said that if any interference were attempted by the Muslim League in Punjab affairs he would go out of the League; but if the Muslim League kept their hands off provincial matters then provincial Ministers would leave Jinnah a free hand in regard to all-India matters, and that this in fact is the kind of working arrangement that at present prevails. If that is so, we must naturally expect these federal issues to be handled almost entirely on a tactical basis, for that is the essential quality of Jinnah's politics. I gather that Jinnah thinks he would be in a stronger position in a British India Federation than in an all-India Federation, and I have had similar views expressed to me by Muslims here. On the other hand if the Congress, rather than the Hindu community, is regarded as the enemy, then the Muslims might in fact find themselves in a better position in an all-India Federation than they would in a British India Federation, which would undoubtedly be dominated by the Congress. As between these two possibilities I am disposed to doubt whether it would be easy to work up strong Muslim feeling in favour of a British India Federation rather than an all-India Federation. In any case I feel that whatever may be the present working arrangement among Muslims, when it really comes to any crucial decisions about their attitude towards Federation, Jinnah will not be left in undisputed control.

6. I am afraid all these views are very vague, but the situation itself seems to me essentially vague. Muslims do not really know their minds. They have not fully faced up to the problem. When they do face up to it, I should doubt whether they would carry their opposition to Federation or to particular forms of Federation to the point of organizing mass resistance. But they may make a strong bid to get certain changes made in the scheme. You ask in your letter whether it would be possible for the Muslim community effectively by itself to impede or hold up the introduction of Federation. I do not know whether, if we looked at Federation as a matter of machinery, they could stop its introduction or working, but it would clearly be a very formidable and indeed

disastrous development if the Muslims were to proceed to the length of active mass resistance. I do not think it is likely to come to this, but with reference to your specific enquiry I think it is only right to state this opinion.

Yours sincerely,
H.G. Haig

44. Muslims and Federation: Linlithgow to Zetland, 7 July 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

Many thanks for your letter of 27th June. I was very much interested by what you tell me that you had it in mind that the Muslims might be able to render Federation unworkable. I continue to take a cheerful view (I hope not too cheerful) of the unlikelihood of this contingency arising; and I think you will agree that the general sense of replies I have received from Governors to the specific enquiry which I have made regarding it goes to support that attitude. I have just had Haig's very clear review which I am sending to you separately. As regards the Muslim Provinces, Craik, as you will have seen, does not take the prospect of serious difficulty in the Punjab seriously. I still await Woodhead's reply. I was however interested to hear that Sikander's Secretary, Khurshid Ali Khan (who is a member of the Council of State and Secretary of the Unionist Party) in conversation with staff a few days ago, had expressed the view that the Muslims would accept Federation 'if imposed upon them'. I have very little doubt that this is the position, and that unless the situation changes radically we need not expect serious trouble.

2. I agree with your criticisms of Sikander's depression as regards the future in the Punjab, the more so I wholly share your view that if there is any one Province in which the Parliamentary system, and Provincial Autonomy, have been an outstanding success, it is the Punjab. I think that what is working in his mind is the apprehension of serious communal differences at a later stage, and the fact that the lines of political and religious divisions tend in this Province to coincide with such precision. You may indeed well ask to what goal Sikander expects to retrace his step I think the answer to that as to his Pakistan's scheme, is that he has not really carried his analysis of the position to its conclusion. I cannot resist the further suspicion (which the conversation which I have had with Sikander and which I have reported to you go some way to justify) that like the great bulk of the countrymen he believes essentially in his heart of hearts in firm personal rule, a conviction the wisdom of which experience may yet show! I think I did mention in an earlier letter that there were signs that the appeals of totalitarian doctrines, particular to the younger generation, was very definitely growing; and we may well find that having with so much labour devised what we regard as the best method of extending the benefits of democracy to this country, we have presented India with something for which she had already lost her taste.

45. Gandhi on Sikander Hyat Khan's 'Scheme': Gandhi to Sikander Hyat Khan, 17 July 1939

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 4–5.

Dear Sir Sikander,

Many thanks for your letter of 12th instant. You have forgotten to answer my question about separate electorates for Harijans.

I have now carefully gone through your scheme and your remarks upon my draft about Hindu-Muslim unity.

The scheme is too complicated for me to form an opinion. I must own to you that I never studied the Government of India Act in the manner required for a proper evaluation of your scheme which I see is designed, so far as the Federal structure is concerned, to replace the Act.

I see that you contemplate zonal legislatures in between the Provincial ones and the Federal legislature. The Government of India scheme itself is much too expensive and complicated for me. Yours seems to add to the expense and the complication.

Then you suggest that the composition of the army should not be disturbed except under the contingency mentioned therein. For an out and out believer in non-violence like me, I would disband the army altogether. An army and non-violence go ill together. But I am painfully conscious that in this extreme view of non-violence I have no partner. How far those who believe in the necessity of the country having an army even after it has come to its own will accept your proposition is more than I can say.

Then you have enunciated Dominion Status as an accepted fact. It is a bitter pill for Congressmen to swallow.

But I see that your solution of the communal tangle is your scheme including the proposal about the army. Yours is the only proposal of a constructive character on behalf of the League. I congratulate you on the great pains you have bestowed upon it. I am glad that you have decided to publish it in full. I must thank you for having taken me into your confidence and asked me to give you my opinion upon it.

As to my draft solution, as I have already told you, it is in no sense adopted by the Working Committee. But it does still represent my views. I prize your criticism upon it. And if it ever formed a basis for the solution of our difficulties, I should adopt many of your suggestions.

Your solution for representation of minorities on services causes difficulty. What are the minorities? Is there a final list? I am therefore very uneasy about communal representation in the services. If we make much of the minorities question in the services, we shall not only endanger efficiency but we shall endanger purity and impartiality in the administration of affairs of the country. But I heartily endorse your suggestion that all the backward members of the nation should be levelled up to the forward ones. I do not want to burden this letter with the other points arising out of your criticism. They are easy at adjustment, if we will make up our minds to meet with the determination not to part without reaching a settlement.

[Enclosure: 1]

Sikander Hyat Khan to Gandhi, 20 July 1939

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 395–97.

My dear Mahatmaji,

Many thanks for your letter of the 11th July which I received this morning. This has crossed my letter of the 18th July.

I am sorry I overlooked to answer your query about the representation of Harijans in the proposed Lahore Corporation. I have made enquiries from the Minister concerned and am informed that no provision has been made in the Bill to provide separate electorates for Harijans. The method of election and representation is at present embodied in the rules and it is proposed to leave this matter to the rules in the new measure also. I am almost certain that the question of separate representation for Harijans will be raised in the Assembly when the Bill is under consideration as several representations have been received from Harijan organizations. So far as Government is concerned, they do not contemplate at the moment to make a departure from the existing practice unless the Harijan representatives in the Assembly press for a revision and if so,

it would largely depend upon what view the Assembly takes regarding this matter. Personally, as you are aware, I am not averse to joint electorates; but unfortunately the trend of events during the past few years has made it even more difficult to achieve this ideal in the absence of a genuine rapprochement between the two major communities.

I am grateful to you for giving careful consideration to any alternative scheme of Federation. Allow me to remove one or two misapprehensions which seem to have arisen due to the reason that you have not had time to make a comparative study of my scheme with the one embodied in the Government of India Act. My proposals do not contemplate a wholesale rejection of the scheme adumbrated in the Government of India Act. At the most it would necessitate modification of about half-a-dozen sections in the Act and the addition of perhaps two or three new sections. It would of course involve a revision of the Federal, Provincial and the Concurrent lists as you will have noticed from the revised list which I sent with my letter of the 18th July. As regards the 'Zonal' Legislatures contemplated in my scheme, there again seems to be some misapprehension. You must have noticed that I do not contemplate any executive authority for the 'zones', and the legislative powers delegated to the Regional Legislatures are meant only to bring the various units in a 'Zone' closer together in order to bring about mutual confidence and trust between the various units. It would not involve any additional expenditure since the members of a Regional Legislature would also be members of the Federal Legislature and will collectively constitute the Federal Legislature. No separate building or organization will be required. If and when necessary, they will meet together to ratify or pass a measure on which the units in a particular 'Zone' are agreed. As a matter of fact, my scheme would be comparatively less expensive as I have suggested a unicameral instead of a bicameral Federal Legislature.

As regards the composition of the Army, I have suggested no more than retention of the *status-quo* so far as the peace-time strength of the Army is concerned. As I explained to you in the course of our conversation, my insistence on this provision is actuated by a desire to create mutual confidence, and in the interests of national harmony and solidarity.

I appreciate your remarks regarding acceptance of Dominion Status. I am aware that all the important political organizations in the country have now adopted 'complete independence' as their final goal. But I am sure you will agree with me that in the circumstances it would be inadvisable to clutch at a shadow and discard the substance if it happens to be within our grasp. After all, what we want is complete control over the administration and affairs of our country and this will be obtained if we get Dominion Status. I am fully aware of the fact that some of our fellow-countrymen would prefer to chase a will-o'-the-wisp rather than give up their demand for complete independence; but it would be for an eminent patriot and leader like you to persuade them to accept the substance and leave alone the shadow.

You mention in your letter that 'Yours is the only proposal of a constructive character on behalf of the League.' Let me hasten to make it quite clear that my scheme has got nothing to do with the League. It has been formulated by me alone and without consultation with any member of the League or for that matter of any other party in the country. It has been conceived with the intention of providing a solution of our communal and political problems and I trust it will be examined and studied by all concerned in the spirit in which it has been conceived.

As regards your draft solution of the communal problem and my comments thereon, I shall be grateful if you would kindly give me some more definite indications of your views, if you desire me to proceed with the matter further. I quite realize that the draft represents only your views; but that is quite sufficient for my purpose, provided you approve of my suggestions with reference to the various items of the draft. I can then proceed to sound important Muslim leaders and the Working Committee of the League and let you know their reactions. It would be no use my trying

to bring them round to my point of view unless I am assured of your wholehearted approval and support in regard to the points mentioned in my note which I handed over to you at Bombay. I need hardly assure you that the correspondence between us will be treated as strictly confidential. Perhaps, you would like to consult the Working Committee of the League and other prominent Muslims. If there is agreement on these points, then we could bring the representatives of the two Working Committees together to approve and ratify them informally.

As regards services, I do not think we need worry about the number of communities which would fall under the category of 'minorities'. The obvious course would be to fix the share of the majority community in each province and leave the balance to be distributed amongst the minorities. This is what we have done in the Punjab. We have given 50 per cent to the Muslims and 50 per cent to non-Muslims. The proportion (7 per cent) surrendered by the majority community was added on to the share of the smaller minorities in the shape of weightage. So the problem is not so complex as it appears to be at first sight. What we need is a genuine change of heart and once this is achieved there should be no difficulty in adjusting differences. I am afraid my letter has become somewhat lengthy; but in view of the vital issues involved I have taken the liberty of encroaching on your time by answering the points raised in your letter in some detail.

46. On Sikander Hyat's Scheme of Federation: Linlithgow to Zetland, 21 July 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

[Extract]

10. ... I have now had from Sikander the Appendices to his scheme and I am sending you a copy of them in this bag. I will, if I receive them in time, add Lewis' comments. My earlier anticipation that nothing is likely to come of Sikander's contact with the Congress is confirmed by information received from Ewart to the effect that the general sense of the Muslim League Working Committee, supported by Jinnah's view, is that the League should not reopen talks with Congress except on the basis of the admission by the latter that the League was the sole organization representing the Muslims in India. That is how I should have expected things to develop. I am interested in the same connection in a recent report from Calcutta to the effect that Bose had urged Jinnah at Bombay that Muslims Leagues should make an alliance with the Forward Bloc, as both were militant organizations. To this Jinnah is reported to have replied that so long as the Mahatma dominated the Congress, he will have nothing to do with anybody connected with it; that should Bose openly renounce allegiance to Gandhi, he might consider the proposal to effect an alliance with the Muslim League and the Forward Bloc. This is an idea likely to be worth watching.

47. Muslim League Propaganda: Demonstration at Allahabad

Leader, 25 July 1939.

Allahabad
23 July 1939

Despite inclement weather, the Allahabad City Muslim League carried out this evening its programme of the inauguration of what it called the 'Jinnah Week', it being the last week of the League's programme of two months' propaganda, started about 29 May last.

The notable feature of the procession organized on the occasion was that almost all the officials of the Muslim League were in the Muslim National Guard uniform, among them being also

Haji Syed Muhammad Husain. The programme began with the flag salutation ceremony at the Muslim League's office, from which the procession was organized, and during the march of the procession, flag hoisting ceremonies were performed at several other places.

Another feature of the celebrations was the participation in the public meeting in Muhammad Ali Park, which followed the procession of a Muslim woman Sardar Akhtar Begum of Hyderabad,¹ who was invited from Cawnpore, where she was staying to find a solution for the Shia-Sunni controversy. Sardar Akhtar Begum, it is pointed out, was the first Muslim woman to address a men's public meeting at Allahabad.

The meeting was presided over by Mr Muhammad Shafiullah Khan, advocate, and a vice-president of the Allahabad City Muslim League.

Shah Matinuddin Usmani, President of the Fatehpur Muslim League emphasized the need of complete unity among the Muslims. He regretted the spirit of revolt against leaders in the case of differences of opinion and stressed that people should try to follow patiently the person whom they had made their leader and not to say that they would leave the party when there were any differences. That was not *tanzim*. Like the previous Speaker he also attached great importance to the use of *garha*.

Malik Sharleuddin, a vice-president of the Cawnpore Muslim League, while stressing the need of unity among the Muslims alleged that the policy of British Government had been to keep the two communities divided, the policy of the Congress Government was to cause a split between Shias and Sunnis. He accused Jamiyat al-ulama-i Hind, the Congress Muslim Ministers and the Congress Muslims of being the enemies of Islam. He contended that prominent Muslims joined the Congress in the beginning as Congress promised to attain freedom. That promise not being fulfilled, the Muslims started leaving the Congress one by one. He added that freedom could not be possible by peaceful means and the only object of luring the Muslims into the Congress fold by promises of freedom was to suppress their existence and assure Hindu rule. Then came the Nehru Report which talked of Dominion Status by which was meant retention of the British rule, but internally the rule of the majority, namely Hindus. He wanted the Muslims to beware and discard all their differences as time had come when all sections among the Muslims should be united.

Sardar Akhtar Begum kept the audience spellbound with her eloquent speech for nearly three-quarters of an hour in spite of drizzling.

She said that the Muslim League was said to be an infant institution of a few months' existence. That was not so. It had been in existence, she asserted, for over 1,300 years, the President of which, then, was Prophet Muhammad and the members of the Working Committee, the four Caliphs. Thus the Muslim League was a world institution and, therefore, she had come out to serve it and she wanted all the Muslims to join it.

The Congress policy, she said, had done one great good. It had awakened not only the Muslim men but also five crores of women. She spoke at length on the virtues of Islam and the need of unity.

Other speakers, besides the president, were Muhammad Faruq of Cawnpore and Maulana Wahiddin of this district.

At the close of the meeting Sardar Akhtar Begum suggested the formation of a branch of the League, started recently, probably at Delhi, of Muslim women and children. With this object a meeting will be held of Muslim women at the residence of Mr Kareem Bux, steel merchant, at Hamam tomorrow at 5 p.m. which Sardar Akhtar Begum will also attend.

¹ Saeeda Sardar Begum, *nom de plume* Akhtar; born in Hyderabad Deccan in 1919, belongs to a literary family of Lucknow; educated from Mahboobia Girls School, Hyderabad; was married to Khan Saheb Saik Abdul Ghani, President

All India Women Muslim League; in 1938 started and edited *Harem* a weekly in Urdu from Cawnpore for regeneration of Muslim Women; was on the UP Defence Council, member, Working Committee, Khashar organization; was an orator and addressed many gatherings.

48. Mr Jinnah's Discovery

Editorial, *Tribune*, 8 August 1939.

8 August 1939

Mr Jinnah has made a great discovery. In the course of a speech at Bombay on the present political situation he expressed the view that 'democracy is unsuited to the genius of India.' Unhappily for Mr Jinnah the view has not even the merit of originality. It has been the traditional view of the enemies of Indian nationalism, of all those to whom the ideal of a free and self-governing India has been an abomination. It has found repeated expression in the speeches and writings of sun-dried bureaucrats in India and of reactionaries and die-hards in Britain. The novelty consists not in the idea, but in the vehicle it has found, and partly also in the ground on which it is made to rest. It is almost incredibly tragic that a man who in the prime of manhood enjoyed the reputation of being one of the three most distinguished Muslim leaders who had braved the wrath of the majority of the Muslim intelligentsia at the time by casting their influence and authority wholly on the side of Indian nationalism, should in the evening of his life commit himself to the view that it is impossible for India ever to be a nation in the accepted sense of that word, and should wind up a speech conceived in the narrowest spirit of communalism by publicly declaring that 'he was born a Muslim, lives a Muslim and will die a Muslim.' But it is impossible to deny that the new position of Mr Jinnah is a logical corollary to his decision to give up to a smaller entity what was meant for his country and for humanity. It has been said of Truth that it makes the greatest difference in the world whether you give it the first or the second affection. The same thing is equally true of love of country and of democratic freedom. The moment you decide to give it the second, instead of the first place in your thought and your affection, from that very moment you start going down the ladder, until you reach a stage when in the famous words of Mr Llyod George you can conscientiously ask, 'can we descend any lower?'

The ground on which Mr Jinnah bases his new position is as different from the ground on which most of those who in the past held the same position based it as he himself is different from them in his antecedents and in his general outlook and sympathies. As a rule the possibility of India's growing into a democratic and self-governing nation has in the past been discounted on the ground that India is an Oriental country, and democracy is unsuited to the genius of Oriental countries. Mr Jinnah is the last man in the world to assent to the stupid idea that the East, which produced all the great religions of the world and which had reached the topmost height of civilization and culture at a time when the West was steeped in barbarism, is peopled by an inferior race which is incapable of understanding or appreciating what is really good and true and strong in Western life and civilization, but he has for his own reasons and his own purposes developed and elaborated the line of argument by which the enemies of democratic and parliamentary government in India have latterly been defending their position. It is in this elaboration and development that the novelty of his position consists.

But, again, the novelty is relative and has reference only to the non-Indian enemies of democratic parliamentary government in India. If Mr Jinnah differs from such men, his latest statement brings him clearly into line with these ultra-communalists who have hitherto been supposed to sail under flags different from his own. 'The cultures of the two communities, Muslim and Hindu,' he says, 'are so different that having the power one naturally tries to run down the other. In such a country,

comprising different nationalities, a democratic parliamentary system of government is an impossibility.' What else was said by the late Sir Muhammad Iqbal¹, the originator of the Pakistan idea? What else is the basis of the several schemes now under the consideration of the Muslim League, the underlying purpose of which is to divide India into Hindu and Muslim zones? Everyone knows that Mr Jinnah was not originally in favour of this idea. He will probably still maintain that he is opposed to it if he is asked point-blank. But the logic of communal separatism is inexorable as fate. Once you accept its basic assumptions you are driven on almost in spite of yourself, to the inevitable conclusion. Of course, Mr Jinnah himself will not give his scheme the name of Pakistan. He wants a division of India not into communal zones, but into provinces each of which is permanently divided community-wise. He has no objection to the maintenance of the present division, provided in each province as well as in the country as a whole the Muslims, no matter how small a minority they may be, are treated as a separate nation, equal in importance and in power and authority to the majority. He would, then, claim the status of a self-governing Dominion for the State composed of these two equal nations. Outwardly superior as this idea is to the Pakistan idea, which would divide India into two permanent and perhaps mutually antagonistic communal zones, it is in fact much worse. The Pakistan scheme would at least maintain the forms of democratic parliamentary government in each of the two zones, with perhaps this difference that it would give separate electorates to the communities constituting the zone. In Mr Jinnah's scheme these forms are conspicuous by their absence whether within or outside the zones. It is based on a complete negation at once of the principle of a common nationality and of the Benthamite principle—each man to count for one and no man to count for more than one. After this explicit declaration Mr Jinnah must be counted as permanently lost to the cause of Indian nationalism. Henceforth his place, as he himself recognizes, is among full-fledged communalists. He will not take long to discover that the better mind of his own community and especially of its youth is as much and as strongly against him in this matter as the better mind of the country as a whole.

¹ Muhammed Iqbal (1877–1938); born at Sialkot, Pakistan; studied at Sialkot, Lahore, Trinity College (Cambridge), took his Ph.D in Philosophy from Munich University. He was a learned philosopher and a gifted poet whose poetry in Persian and Urdu is regarded as the greatest in modern times. He returned to Lahore in 1908 and started practicing as a lawyer. Active in the Anjuman-i-Himayat-e-Islam, a congregation of Muslim intellectuals; was a strong proponent of the political and spiritual revival of Islamic civilization and attracted to Jamaluddin Afghani and Pan-Islamic movement. Published his first collection of poetry, *Asrar-e-Khudi* (Secrets of Self) in Persian in 1915 and composed more than 12,000 poems in the rest of his life, including such works as *Rumuz-i-Bekhud* (Hints of Selflessness), *Payam-e-Mashriq* (The Message of the East), *Zabur-e-Ajam* (Persian Psalms) and *Bang-e-Dera* (The Call of the Marching Bell). While in his earlier works he urged for revival of spiritual and cultural heritage of Islam from a global perspective, his later works were specifically directed at Indian Muslims with a stronger emphasis on Islam and Muslim spiritual and political awakening. The British government conferred knighthood upon him in 1922; he was active in the Muslim League since its inception, and was elected to the executive committee in 1908. He supported the Khilafat movement and was in close touch with leaders like Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali; in 1926 he was elected to Punjab Legislative Assembly from Lahore; presided over All India Muslim League annual session at Allahabad in 1930; put forward the proposal that 'Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan be amalgamated into a single state', thus becoming the first man to espouse the idea of separating the Muslim majority provinces; participated in the first and second Round Table Conference in England (1930 and 1931). Later he became President of the Punjab Muslim League, played an influential role in persuading Jinnah to take charge of the League in India. He remained very active in organizing and rejuvenating the All India Muslim League under the leadership of M.A. Jinnah.



49. The Muslim League Council Meeting

Hindustan Times, 28 August 1939.

27 August 1939

Mr M.A. Jinnah who some time back pulled up Sir Sikander Hyat Khan¹ for his anti-Muslim League activities, came to his rescue yesterday, when repeated attempts were made to censure his conduct in several respects at a meeting of the Council of the All India Muslim League. Mr Jinnah appealed successfully to the movers of such resolutions to withdraw.

After a heated discussion the meeting decided to give support to the British Government in the event of War, provided all the Muslim demands were met.

The grounds of attack against Sir Sikander were his recent statement offering unconditional help on behalf of the Punjab to the British Government in the event of a War, his declaration in the Punjab Assembly in favour of the Indo-British Trade Agreement in contravention of the policy of his leader, Jinnah, and that of the League Party in the Central Assembly, the issuing of an alternative scheme to the proposed scheme of Federation as embodied in the Government of India Act without consulting the Working Committee of the League, co-operation of his above-named lieutenants with the Sandhurst Committee² and, lastly, the failure of the organizing committee of which Sir Sikander was the leader to form a Provincial Muslim League in Punjab.

From the discussions and the tone of the speeches seeking to condemn the many acts of commissions and omissions and the conspicuous absence of Sir Sikander from the meeting give the impression that the League is on the parting of ways. In fact, the rumour got currency that Sir Sikander was fed up with the League and was prepared to play the role of the late Sir Mohammad Shafi³ and form a rival League organization with the aid of his Unionist supporters. Another thing that supported this belief was that Sir Sikander Hyat Khan and Mr Jinnah had not been able to see eye to eye on the question of nomination of League candidates for the Amritsar and Multan by-elections. It was openly stated that Mr Jinnah had refused to recognize any such thing as League-cum-Unionist ticket.

Mr Jinnah sprang a surprise by saving Sir Sikander from being censured by adducing legal arguments in his favour. All the resolutions seeking to condemn him and his friends and recommending disciplinary action against him were withdrawn on the assurance that the matters sought to be raised by them would be considered by the Working Committee of the League.

¹ Khan, Sir Sikander Hyat (1892–1942); born in 1892 at Multan in Western Punjab; his father was the first Indian to be appointed an Assistant Commissioner and his mother was the daughter of Chief Minister of Kapurthala State; educated from MAO High School, Aligarh and University College, London; was Honorary, Recruiting officer during World War I, and Third Afghan War and was the first Indian Officer to Command a Company on active Service; after the War, held rank of First Class Magistrate up to 1929; member, Punjab Legislative Council, 1921–42; Chairman, Punjab Reformers Committee, 1928 to work with Simon Commission, later taken on Governor's Executive Council, 1929 and later was Revenue member in 1930; acted as Governor of Punjab, 1932–34; Deputy Governor of Reserve Bank of India, February 1935; Unionist member Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1937; Premier of Punjab April 1937–December 1942; member, National Defence Council; as Premier followed a non-communal policy and sought the cooperation of all sections of the population in his task; following a Muslim League threat on the Shahidganj mosque issue, entered into a pact with Jinnah, known as Sikandar–Jinnah Pact, under which all Muslim members of the Unionist Party in the Assembly joined the M.L. (Muslim League); later entered into a pact with the Akali Sikhs for sharing Power; attended the special Session, All India Muslim League, Calcutta, April 1938 where his handling of the Shahidganj mosque issue was discussed and approved; favoured cooperation with the Government in its War efforts during World War II; was hostile to the idea of a Federation under Government of India Act, 1935; pleaded for the loosest of federations with the division of the Country into seven zones enjoying the fullest autonomy; was against the partition of Punjab; died suddenly of heart failure, 26 December 1942.

²Sandhurst Committee: A committee chaired by Sir Andrew Skeen in 1925 to look into the local demand of Indians for the greater say in matters of defence. It recommended among other issues the induction of Indians into the RAF College at Cromwell and the formation of an Indian Air Force manned fully by Indians. As a follow-up of this report, six Indians were sent to the RAF college for the first time in 1930. When 5 out of 6 successfully became pilots, the Indian air force came into being on 8th October 1932. The first unit of the IAF, No. 1 squadron, was formed on 1 April 1933 at Dright Road Airfield, Karachi.

³Muhammed Shafi: (1869–?); born at Bhaghbanpura, Lahore; educated at Lahore, and then Law at Middle Temple; President, Punjab Chief Bar Association, 1917; promoted to the cause of Muslims through educational progress and political organizations; Education Member, Government of India; framed the Muslim University Bill and piloted it through the Imperial Legislative Council; helped growth of bodies like Anjuman-i-Islamia (Hoshiarpur), Young Men's Muhammadan Association (Lahore) and the Muslim League; presided over the Lucknow session of All India Muslim League, 1913; opposed Joint Electorates; formed 'Shafi League' in Punjab, 1927, after the differences with Jinnah; nominated to the Provincial Legislative council twice, 1909 and 1911; member, Imperial Legislative Council, 1911, 1914 and 1917; member, Viceroy's Executive Council after the First World War I; presided over the Lahore session of the Muslim League.

50. On 'Communal Problem': Linlithgow to Zetland, 31 August 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

[Extract]

16. I had a long talk this morning with Sir Muhammad Yusuf,¹ who, you will remember, was formerly a Minister in the United Provinces. It was entirely devoted to communal problem, and while I do not regard Muhammad Yusuf as necessarily of the highest quality, he is a considerable Zamindar, who has had much experience of office, both under the old regime and in the 'Minorities' Ministry which preceded the acceptance of office by Congress in July 1937. Our discussion concentrated on the communal issue and on the threat to Islam represented by the Congress and, indeed, by Hinduism generally in this country. He urged that it was impossible for His Majesty's Government to evacuate India, and leave the Muslims to the Hindus; that it was essential that we should continue to look after Muslim interests and protect them against being swallowed up by the major community; and that the fact that we should do so was in no sense incompatible with the achievement of our part of Federation. If we were going to stay in India and retain our position, well and good. If, on the other hand, we contemplated clearing out, then the Muslims must take steps to keep us here if they could. He and his co-religionists, being as they were a minority, were frankly worried at the development of democracy in this country, democratic as might be the ideals underlying the theory and practice of Islam. I asked if he did not fear that Jinnah's public confession of his lack of faith in democracy might damage Muslim prospects at the polls. He replied that he was confident that every seat held by Muslims today, and more besides, would be successfully defended or contested by his community at the next General Election. He added that he gave full weight to the insistent urge for self-government and the unity of India, which, he admitted underlay in greater or lesser degree opinion in all parties. But, however that might be, the fact remained that the people of this country were essentially not democratically minded. What they had most in their vision is food and security; and that was what carried, and must continue to carry, most weight with them. I asked him if he could for a moment suggest that it was practical politics for His Majesty's Government to abandon the idea of reforms of advance towards self-government and the like, which they always set before themselves and which had always been demanded by Indian political opinion, and to perpetuate a communal situation in India and use it, for their own ends in this country? He replied that, that was not for a moment his intention, but that we could make a material contribution towards easing the position if we would give a definite indication that it was our intention under Federation to leave India to itself. I put it to him

that while the Muslims were, on a mere counting of heads, a minority, they were not really a minority in practice, given the fact that they numbered almost one hundred millions and that they represented a great and distinct tradition of their own. Muhammad replied that that was perfectly true if the Muslims were left to look after themselves. But what had happened had been that we tied their hands by the vote and by the scheme of the Act; and that they are now afraid of being left at the mercy of a Centre in which they would by no means be represented in any substantial proportion. I did what I could to lead him to regard this difficult problem on reasonable lines, and I hope with some success, but I think it worth reporting our conversation to you, as it is so characteristic of the attitude, I suspect, of a very large number of Muslims. You know from my private letters to you over the last year and from reports of conversation I have had with Jinnah and the like, how great is the uncertainty of this community as to the future, and how deep and ill-defined their apprehensions as to what may happen¹ to them at the hands of the majority community. I got the feeling, however, that the sky was beginning to clear^a a little, and I think it no bad thing that we should be beginning to move from a stage in which we are merely abused for failing to take an adequate share in the active protection of Muslims interests into one in which the value of our continued association with government in this country is more fully realized by them.

¹ Nawab Sir Muhammad Yusuf (1895–1956); educated at Muir Central College, and Christian college, Allahabad; Bar-at-Law; member, UP Legislative Council, 1920–34; and UP, Legislative Assembly, 1937–39, and 1946–52; minister of Local-Self Government and Health, UP Government 1937; President, Agra Province Zamindars' Association, and Muslim Educational Conference, Allahabad, 1942.

51. On the Muslim League: Zetland to Linlithgow, 19–20 September 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

[Extract]

3. I have just seen the account of the attitude of the Muslim League which has been telegraphed by *Reuter*. It at least has the merit of lucidity and if *Reuter's* telegram contains the whole of it, it would appear to consist of three plain demands:

- (1) that no promise of constitutional advance would be made without the consent and approval of the All-India Muslim League;
- (2) that a close liaison shall be established between the Government and the League; and
- (3) that the scheme of Federation as provided in the Act of 1935 shall be not merely suspended but finally abandoned.

This, in the light of Jinnah's talk with you and of Nazimuddin's shrewd anticipation of the attitude of Congress, combined with his appeal to us to give away nothing to Congress in return for their support, as set out in the memorandum which he gave to Woodhead, makes it clear, I think, that the Muslim dislike of the Congress Ministries, which in Jinnah's case amounts to violent hatred, is a thing which has to be taken into account in a highly complex situation.



52. Viceroy's Interviews with Ismail Khan¹, Savarkar and Ambedkar:
Linlithgow to Zetland, 7 October 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI.

[Extract]

1. The Nawab (Ismail Khan: President, UP Muslim League) repeated that it was essential that any declaration should make it clear that a democratic system at the Centre was not acceptable to the Muslim community, and went on to urge that the Congress claim to speak for India and to control Defence is perfectly inadmissible. If any declaration is to be made it must, he said, include specific assurances to the Muslims that their claims and rights would not be left at the mercy of a communal majority. I tried to steer him round this corner, and asked whether it would not equally meet his claims if any declaration contained some reference to the claims of important minorities or their existence. He did not dissent from this but said it was essential that the words 'minorities' should be emphasized. He was wholly opposed to the idea of an All Parties Conference which would be likely, so far as he could judge, to result only in a dog-fight of which there were enough already in India. As for the Mahasabha, after their recent activities in Hyderabad, they were intensely unpopular with Islam and its followers everywhere. Finally, on the matter of communal feeling, he told me that reviewing the situation today, as against the situation he had known it in the past, he had never known conditions worse. Apart from any general feeling between the communities as such, there was an intenseness of bitterness between man and man even in the upper classes without parallel in his experience.

2. I passed from the Nawab to the company of Mr Savarkar, whose somewhat lurid record and whose alleged connection with the murder of Sir Curzon Wylie will be sufficiently familiar to you. I found him a not very attractive type of little man, but he was definitely interesting and we had a very friendly talk. The situation, he said, was that His Majesty's Government must now turn to the Hindus and work with their support. After all, though we and the Hindus had a good deal of difficulty with one another in the past, that was equally true of the relations between Great Britain and the French and, as recent events have shown, of relations between Russia and Germany. Our interests were now the same and we must therefore work together. Even though now the most moderate of men, he had himself been in the past an adherent of a revolutionary party, as possibly, I might be aware. (I confirmed that I was.) But now that our interests were so closely bound together the essential thing was for Hinduism and Great Britain to be friends; and the old antagonism was no longer necessary. The Hindu Mahasabha, he went on to say, favoured an unambiguous undertaking of Dominion Status at the end of the War. It was true, at the same time, that they challenged the Congress claim to represent anything but themselves. Congress had accepted office under false pretences and on the understanding that they were doing so in order to wreck the constitution. But 'we Hindus' were waiting for them. There was a very great deal of the Congress policy which it had been impossible for the Mahasabha to oppose, because it was essentially a Hindu policy, but, for all that the Mahasabha was determined to have them out. If it could, he could produce much better men to the places so vacated. He went on to urge the importance of military training for the Hindus and the repeal of the Arms Act of a national militia, of compulsory military training for the educated youth of the Hindu community, and the readjustment of the plan of recruitment for the ordinary Indian Army in favour of Hindu classes at present without a real chance of securing admission to the Army. It was of the utmost importance, he said, that we should chastise the frontier tribes now. He could only think that we have some arrangement with Afghans which prevented us from taking a stronger line with them. But the chastisement must be with Hindu troops, the only troops on which we could rely.

3. I asked him for his views as regards effective implementation of any declaration that might be made, to which he immediately replied that the Mahasabha had a list of possible members of a Cabinet in the event of our declaration taking that form. Without much delay he reverted to the communal problem. Pakistan, he said, was an idea wholly abominable, but it was very important that he should not minimize its significance from a Muslim point of view or the depth of Muslim feeling in support of it, which he believed to be growing all the time. I told him that so far as the future was concerned it was no good having patched up peace at the top without a corresponding reaction in the Provinces, but he replied that the communal position in the provinces will remain in the present condition whether we might say it ended.

4. The conversation then took a very interesting turn. What, he said, would happen if the corners were to go out and if a Section 93 situation were to result? I said that in that event obviously the Governor would try to govern by himself, with a majority Ministry, if possible, but that there should be no question of an election. He asked who would be in charge in a Section 93 situation to which I replied that it would be the Governor under my direction. But who, said he, would be his counsellors? I temporized and advised him to wait and see. He proceeded to press me as to whether we contemplated that they should include no Indians, to which I refused to give any answer, telling him that I could not deal with hypothetical questions, but suggesting that it would be extremely unfair to promising Indian politicians of the future to ask them to accept responsibility in such circumstances. He said, rather to my amazement, that he begged that the Mahasabha should be left to take the risks of such damage to the careers of individuals if they desired to do so. With the Congress out of the way and the general governmental situation in a state of dissolution, they might be able to produce some extremely good advisers. But could I tell him whether we thought of taking on any number of Muslim advisers? I refused to answer beyond saying that he would realize as well as I did that the post-war position mattered a good deal more in certain ways than the War position, and that he might judge for himself of the likelihood of our basing our arrangements on a one-sided communal panel. His last words were to beg me not to inflate Congress too much. It was true that they were no end of a nuisance, and had the best fighting organization in India, but very many of their supporters had come in on Hindu tickets and the Mahasabha intended to have them out. I found the little man quite interesting and very ready to talk frankly. I will not trouble you with the observations he addressed to me about the communal award and its inequities and the appropriate franchise basis for popular representations, on both of which topics you can imagine his views. But when I asked him, as we parted, whether I could look for some general support from the Mahasabha in relation to whatever might be done at the Centre, without asking public opinion he was disposed to think that the answer would be 'yes' once the Mahasabha knew our scheme.

5. From the President of the Mahasabha, I turned appropriately to Dr Ambedkar, who remains in my judgment as impressive figure as in the past. I do not know that I need to trouble you with any very lengthy account of our conversation, which lasted the best part of an hour. He told me that the depressed classes had never suffered more than they were suffering now from the Congress, and that there was now in his judgment an organized persecution designed to drive his community politically so far as possible into the Congress camps. He and I had seen something of one another in 1934-35; but he had had time to think since then, and the general conclusion which he had in the result reached was that the parliamentary system would not do for India. I asked him whether he would say that in public, to which he replied he would be perfectly ready to do so with the utmost emphasis. He was 100 per cent opposed to self-government at the Centre and would resist it in any possible way. As regards liaison at the Centre, he favoured a consultative group but was very strongly opposed to an All Parties meeting on the ground that there would be no hope

whatever of our being able to do business as one, owing to the dissensions that would arise. He was equally opposed to an expanded Executive Council which he thought would never work together, and he begged that no responsibility should be given at the Centre but that whatever organization we might devise should be consultative in character only. His last words were to beg for some consideration for the depressed classes in connection with nominations to the Indian Civil Service and to remark rather acidly that they had had no help from Gandhi, as regards scheduled caste representation in Provincial Cabinets, save in Madras, where owing to the effect that the scheduled castes had 30 members in the Assembly, they were in a position in fact more or less to insist on consideration.

6. These three very typical interviews with representatives of three different points of view are a sufficient indication of the currents and cross-currents confronting us at the moment. I am interested in the general aversion from an All Parties' meeting and I shall telegraph to you on that point, as it is of political interest at Home. Let me add that Zafrullah in conversation a day or two ago produced the additional argument against a conference that, undesirable as it might be from the Congress point of view, it was undesirable also so far as the Muslims were concerned, in view of the risk that they would come out of it very badly with the appearance of standing between India and self-government. The difficulty of making any declaration of an extensive character such as Congress would like is patent, and becomes more so everyday. As for the machinery for liaison at the Centre, the balance remains I think as a whole—despite Gandhi's opposition—in favour of a fairly broadly based but small consultative committees.

¹ Ismail Khan, Nawab Muhhammed (1884–1958); born at Agra, UP; educated at Cambridge; entered into politics for the cause of Muslims, attained greater prominence during the Khilafat movement; prominent leader of Muslim League from 1930 to 1946; a member of its working committee for a long period; president of the UP League Party and a member of League Action Committee during 1945–46.

53. Fazlul Haq on Congress Ministry: A.K. Fazlul Haq to Linlithgow, 13 October 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI.

I am taking the liberty of writing this letter in order to put on record my views on the various points which I had the privilege of discussing with Your Excellency during the interview....

I will not waste my time trying to emphasize the fact that the Congress does not in any way represent the people of India as a whole,—its pretensions on that point are hollow and unfounded—nor do I wish to waste time by trying to labour the point that the Congress has hardly got any power either for good or for mischief. They cannot help England in this War, because the Congress has no control over the people who ordinarily enlist in the Army. The fighting races are absolutely beyond the control of the Congress and the Congress threat that in case nothing is done, whole-hearted support will not be given to England by India is absolutely unjustified and baseless. The only point is, what is it that your Excellency should implement in the declaration which is going to be made on behalf of his Majesty's Government.

I think that I forgot to mention to Your Excellency that the Muslims are very bitter in their complaints against the Congress Governments.¹ Various and very serious charges have been brought against these Congress Ministers, but there seems to be an impression in some quarters that these charges have not been proved. If Your Excellency thinks that they are well founded, no proof is necessary and Your Excellency can act on the assumption that there are grounds for these charges. If, on the contrary, these charges have not been proved, or at any rate no sufficient proofs have

been forthcoming, there is still one very important point to consider which I wish to stress in this connection. It is this: whatever the causes may be, there cannot be the slightest doubt that Muslim feelings during the last 2 ½ years have been bitter against the Congress Ministries and that the Muslim press have with one voice condemned the Congress Ministers as harsh, tyrannical, communal and determined to crush the Muslims politically, socially, economically and otherwise. It is the exhibition of wounded feelings of a great community throughout these 2½ years and in every single province which has been under the domination of the Congress. In this connection I wish to draw Your Excellency's attention to the statement issued by Sir Jwala Prashad Srivastava;² ex-Minister, the United Provinces, in the course of an interview to the *Pioneer* about the Congress and the League attitude to the War. To quote Sir Jawala Prasad: 'Without in anyway approving or disapproving the attitude taken up by the Muslim League, can it be denied that the feeling is widespread and general among the Muslims that their interests are not safe in the hands of the Congress and unless these are effectively safeguarded no further constitutional advance should take place.' He adds: 'In all seriousness, can there be any real self-government in India so long as there is so much of distrust and open hostility between the two important communities?' 'It cannot be denied that in their anxiety to pursue its so-called "Mass Contact" programme, the Congress has failed miserably to solve Hindu-Muslim problem.'

The position, therefore, is that in any decision His Majesty's government may take regarding India's further constitutional advance, the Muslims and other minorities must be made to feel that their interests are really safe and secure and are not exposed to the mercy of a political faction which has miserably failed to discharge its duties towards the minorities of India.

There is one other point which I wish to emphasize. I believe it is the duty of the British Government in the face of the charges and the very serious charges that have been brought by the Muslims against the Congress to have a Royal Commission of Enquiry into the working of the Reforms since the introduction of Provincial Autonomy. We, in Bengal and the Punjab, would be quite willing to lay our cards on the table and to come under the scrutiny of such a Royal Commission. If Your Excellency thinks that the charges have not been substantiated, it is because the Muslims have not had any opportunity of producing any evidence before any tribunal. The newspapers would not publish accounts of Muslim grievances. It is only the Muslim press which have been ventilating these grievances, but unfortunately the Muslim press does not command a good audience in India and is not, therefore, strong and impressive. I hope Your Excellency will take all the facts into consideration when Your Excellency makes a declaration regarding the post-War aims of Great Britain towards India.

¹ There was much correspondence between Haq and Nehru on the subject between 30 October 1939 and 16 December 1939. The letters of Nehru are included in volume 10 of his *Selected Works*, edited by S. Gopal. For example, Nehru to Fazlul Haq, 30 October, 13 November, 18 November, 16, 18, 26 December 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 461–72. For a strong editorial comment on Fazlul Haq's charges, see *Hindu*, 26 December 1939.

² Srivastava, Dr Jwala Prasad; born in 1889 in Bansī, Basti district UP; educated at Cawnpore and Allahabad, proceeded to England in 1908 to study in Manchester College of Technology; returned to India in 1912; served in the great War, 1919; gave up Government service and took to private business; elected to UP Legislative Council 1926 and 1930; re-elected to the UP Legislative Assembly, 1937, served as Chairman, UP Simon Committee, 1928; and for three years Honorary Chairman, Cawnpore Improvement Trust, Minister of Education UP, 1931; Minister for Finance and Industries, UP Government, 1937.



54. Congress–League Question: Jinnah’s Reply to the Mahatma

Leader, 30 October 1939.

Delhi

27 October 1939

Mr M.A. Jinnah, President of the Muslim League, has issued the following statement:

‘What can one think of responsible leaders of the Congress including Mr Gandhi? Mr Gandhi in his article in the *Harijan* dated 21 October starts by stating that in my reply to the Congress President Babu Rajendra Prasad’s letter which offered to refer the Congress–League question to an arbitration tribunal, I said that I had already placed the whole case before the Viceroy and Governor-General. Mr Gandhi said: “It is unfortunate that he rejected Rajendra Babu’s proposal. Is it rejection of a proffered hand of friendship?” I ask any intelligent man to judge for himself whether it was an offer to refer the Congress–League question to arbitration. In some other quarters it is said that the hand of friendship which was offered in that letter has been rejected. Let us examine the whole question.

‘Babu Rajendra Prasad in his letter said that he would get the Congress Working Committee pass a resolution to appoint Sir Maurice Gwyer or some other person to investigate only any specific charges which we would formulate against the Ministries in Congress-governed provinces. The first question arises: What is the authority of the Working Committee, legal or constitutional? Our allegations are against the Ministries of certain provinces which are responsible to their legislatures and to the electorates in respective provinces. It is true that the Congress Working Committee is a Fascist grand council and the Congress Ministries are reduced to a position of being merely their creatures, but we cannot acquiesce in that position. The party accused not only the Ministries but the Congress Working Committee whose cause is carried out by the Ministries.

‘Now let us see how the Congress president begins his offer. He starts by saying that our allegations of charges are without foundation whatsoever. So the accused has already passed his judgment and given the decision. But thereafter he proceeds that he will get the Congress Working Committee pass a resolution to appoint an impartial independent tribunal if we specify our charges. So they have already decided the terms of reference, scope and authority of the tribunal. Then again, what power can they confer upon the tribunal to summon witnesses, take evidence on oath and call for production of documents that might be required? Furthermore to whom will this independent impartial tribunal report for any action to be taken in the light of its findings, I suppose to the Congress Working Committee. The accused will judge finally as to the action, if any was to be taken against the ministries concerned. It is a mentality which has gone beyond any sense of responsibility. The whole thing will be a travesty of justice.’

55. Note of an Interview Between the Viceroy and M.A. Jinnah at the Viceroy’s House, New Delhi, on 4 November 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI.

After concluding my conversation with Mr Gandhi on the morning of Saturday, 4th November, I invited Mr Jinnah to come to see me that afternoon.

2. He started off by describing at great length how Mr Gandhi had approached him before the Conference with me on 1st November, a move of which Mr Jinnah was disposed to complain, and had enquired of him as to whether it was not possible for the Congress and Muslims to get together and to present a joint claim for the declaration that Congress wanted. They had pressed him on

this line for two or three days, and he had a most exhausting time and been placed in a most difficult position, since they had made particular use of the argument that unless he was prepared to meet them, he and his friends would be clearly exposed before the public as the one real obstacle to Home Rule for India. No effort had been spared by the Congress spokesman to get him to adopt their point of view.

3. I said that as Mr Jinnah was aware, I had avoided the idea of an All Parties Conference partly with a view to preventing that line of argument from being fully developed against him, and I had hoped that the specific remit which I had embodied in my letter to him, Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad of 1st November with reference to joint representation would not arouse the same risk of a concentrated attack upon him on the ground he mentioned.

4. Mr Jinnah replied that the plain fact was that he had been quite unable to get anyone on the Congress side to take any interest in the proposal for the expansion of the Executive Council. They kept hammering away at the declaration, and incidentally at the question of his own position. Not only had their preliminary questioning most strongly urged of the right of Muslims to speak for themselves through the Muslim League, Congress had not hesitated to carry the matter to a point further and to question Mr Jinnah's own right to speak on behalf of the Muslims. In three days' discussion it had proved quite impossible to get even these preliminary matters disposed of. He had urged the Congress not to worry too much about the declaration until the Congress and the Muslims had got together generally. They could then see to what extent it would be possible to formulate a scheme. But Congress were not satisfied and had refused to accept that proposition. The fundamental issue was, in fact, that the Muslims were determined to settle their own main grievances with the Hindus before there could be any question of further constitutional advance. The Hindus on the other hand were insistent on securing constitutional pledges first and leaving a settlement with the Muslims until later.

5. Passing from this aspect of the matter, I said to Mr Jinnah that I hoped he would not think me impertinent if I talked for a moment of his own position and of that of the Muslim League as developed by him. He has given me very valuable help by standing firm against Congress claims and the government was duly grateful. It was clear that if he, Mr Jinnah, had supported the Congress in their demand for a declaration and confronted me with a joint demand, the strain upon me and upon His Majesty's Government would have been very great indeed. I thought, therefore, I could claim to have vested interest in his position, I had been asking myself how far that position was intrinsically sound. But I was bound to confess that I did not like it. His constituents, as I saw it, had been so thoroughly soured by the experiences of democratic institutions in the provinces for two-and-a-half years from April 1937, that he and they had now turned their back on everything that had been said by them and by their representatives at the Round Table Conference and the Joint Select Committee, and were prepared, publicly to repudiate the idea of democracy, self-government and Federation, because of the risk involved in them of Hindu domination at the Centre. But was there not the risk that, while he was at the moment out of his immediate difficulties, he and his friends might find that they were in something like a dead end? Where did the future lie? The Muslims now had the appearance of being anti-national and anti-democratic. What outlet did he foresee for his young men, and what method of dealing with the demands for a stronger policy of nationalism which his younger generation would certainly advocate? Moreover, I did not believe that he could escape from this dilemma by the idea which had been so widely ventilated of having two Indias; or that any real solution was to be found in transferring populations from the humid South to the cold and barren North and by parcelling out the Princes. In short, he was, if I might so describe it 'sitting pretty' now, but I was apprehensive that he was laying up stores of

troubles for himself before very long, and that the eroding effect of nationalism on the foundations of his platform was likely to be swift and serious.

6. Mr Jinnah said that he did not in the least resent what I had been saying and, indeed, felt the force of my argument. He realized that His Majesty's Government and I were still attracted by the dream of Federation. He called it a dream because in his view it definitely was a dream. The principle that a Government resting solely on indigenous support should be able to compel obedience, did not run true to India's history, and it was in these circumstances that he had reluctantly found himself driven to set aside as practical politics the idea of a Federation. Equally, he was extremely doubtful as to the capacity of India and Indians to look after themselves. When Mr Gandhi had asked him a couple of days earlier why he had promised to support His Majesty's Government, he had replied 'because of India.' If the British should by any chance be beaten in the War and driven out of India, India would break into a hundred pieces in three months and lie open, in addition, to external invasion. It was because he knew that we were really clinging still to Federation, that he had pressed me in connection with the clarification, of my declaration as to how far the review, which His Majesty's Government had expressed their willingness to undertake at the end of the war, was on the scheme as a whole and not merely on 'details'.

7. I said at once that he was quite right in thinking that we did still adhere to Federation as the best practical solution of this extremely difficult problem. As for his second point, the promise was in terms to review the whole position.

8. Mr Jinnah replied that he had felt certain that the first was the case and he appreciated the frankness of my reply, which again was what he had expected, and which he respected. He thought himself that we would have to abandon Federation, and he repeated that he thought that Federation was a dream. He knew that we were a very persistent people and most reluctant to give up anything to which we had put our hand, more particularly when, as in the present case, our project had taken statutory form after a long period of preliminary investigation. But reluctant as we might be to give up Federation, he thought himself that we should find that it would be Federation that would give us up and that it was no more than a fantasy.

9. I said to Mr Jinnah that I of course accepted the sincerity of his view, but that my own feeling was that his 'dream' was very much a reality. I proceeded to develop the urge for unification as the only route to enhanced status, and the strength of that urge; and I added that to the extent that he was in fact on a bad wicket in opposing unification, I wished I could convince him that our dream might move into a new phase of evolution and have to be tried out. He said he quite understood my point of view but felt bound still to disagree.

10. Mr Jinnah having secured from me an assurance that we would be concerned with the whole scheme of the Act in these post-War conversations and not merely with 'details', and having thus established his point on that matter, dismissed it as of relatively little value; and went on to say that the really important thing was the securing of an undertaking that the Muslim community would not be compelled by his Majesty's Government to accept something they did not want. I asked him in reply how long it would be, if we were to give any community or party the right of veto such as he clearly desired, before, the next claimant with similar rights would come along? How were we to reconcile these vetos? No Government in my judgment, responsible as the Paramount Authority for a country such as India could have its freedom of action fettered by a majority, much less by a minority, however important. Perhaps he would tell me who was to decide where in such an event 'the interests' of Muslims would end. He would realize at once that we might find ourselves inhibited from action in almost any direction because of the possibility of claim in connection with any matter, however, remotely it reacted of Muslim interests.

11. Mr Jinnah said that I was going too far in putting the case as I had put it. There was in fact substance and reason in his point and he wished to make an appeal to me about it. After the War, in his judgment, we were almost certain to have a radical Government in Great Britain and he had been greatly struck by the Lord's debate of a couple of days previously in the course of which prominent personages who were quite likely to be in the Cabinet after the War, had frankly urged that in India the majority must rule and the minority must take their medicine. This seemed to him a complete fallacy, based on a misunderstanding of the closeness of analogy between conditions in the United Kingdom and the conditions here. Where there was, broadly speaking a common blood and homogeneous people, that proposition might work, but we could not come to India, with its immense variety of differences—cultural, religious, geographical, historical and the depth of the cleavages as between great communities—and endeavour to apply a wholesale and rough and ready solution of difficulties such as could be expected and such as we could agree to make work at Home. What he was apprehensive of was that the type of outlook represented by the opposition at home at the present day would, when it came into power, force democratic government in India and anaesthetize the Muslims. He had not the least doubt that that was a real and serious risk. What he wanted in these circumstances was a guarantee against the next government or against at any rate a government of the type he had mentioned. I admitted that there was some substance in his point. I asked Mr Jinnah whether he suggested that if he had adopted the line he was taking today in regard to Federation and democracy at the three Round Table Conferences and the Joint Select Committee, the scheme of the Act would have been written in its present form. He and his friends had, after all, supported the general concept of the Act. He replied that he took the point but that at that time he had not had the bitter experience that he had since had of life under a Hindu communal government. He did not anticipate that his Majesty's present government would be false to the pledges that had been given or would endeavour to coerce the minorities. But a government of the type which we might expect post-War might well lose patience with the representation of the minorities and try to drive those minorities to accept an unacceptable scheme. I told him that I understood his point even if I did not altogether agree with it.

12. Mr Jinnah then said that he thought the best thing would be that he should send me a letter, with a request for an answer, putting that point in which he had just touched. I warned him that neither he nor any other party would persuade His Majesty's Government to give him a veto such as he clearly wanted on constitutional reform, but that I could myself readily submit his views to Secretary of State for the decision of His Majesty's Government. Mr Jinnah expressed his appreciation and left me with the impression that he would be quite prepared to accept a refusal.

56. Viceroy–Jinnah Meeting: Linlithgow to Zetland, 6 November 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2306, NAI.

[Extract]

3. ... I have not telegraphed regarding my interview with Jinnah, though it seems desirable I may send you a short telegram in the next day or two. Let me however briefly say that he told me that he had the most difficult time possible with the Congress during the days of negotiation between the Congress and the Muslim League that followed the joint meeting which I convoked here on the 1st November. They had never apparently made any attempt to get down to the merits of the proposition which I had put to the joint meeting, and had concentrated on the issue of an 'independence' declaration in more or less wide terms. Every effort had been made to frighten

Jinnah by arguments that if he was not very careful he would find himself standing out before the world as one stumbling-block in the way of the achievement of independence by India. But he had had enough fortitude, though at some cost in physical exhaustion, to resist this pressure, and the Congress hopes of a joint approach to me on the basis of a demand for such a declaration had accordingly been disappointed.

4. He summed up the general position well by saying that the fundamental issue was that the Muslims were determined to settle their main grievances with the Hindus before there could be any question of going any further. The Hindus, on the other hand, were insistent that they should secure their constitutional objectives first and leave their discussions and any agreements with the Muslims and any minorities till later.

5. We went on to talk about the 'clarifications' which he desired in my statement. I assured him that we were concerned not merely with 'details' but with the whole plan and I warned him incidentally that, while I quite appreciated the Muslim point of view, it was not free from danger for the future. I asked him if he did not feel driven to the conclusion that the nationalist urge would in due course break out among his young men, and whether on that assumption he could really hope to remain at a point at which he was continually open to attack as the main obstacle to the attainment of nationalist ambitions. He saw the force of the point and admitted it, but he was clear that the stage had not yet been reached at which it was of any decisive importance.

6. As regards Federation he remained hostile. We were, he said, quite clearly anxious to get back to the federal ideal. But there was no material change in the Muslim attitude and while he admitted that his own view that Federation was in the Indian circumstances likely to be a dream, might prove to be wholly mistaken. Still on this point, he held to that view.

7. But the really important point he raised was as regards guarantees for the future. I do not propose to go into this at great length in the present letter, but, briefly, he urged most strongly that the type of speech made by Samuel in the recent Lords' debate was the clearest possible indication to the Muslim community of the dangers which might face them so far as His Majesty's Government and Parliament were concerned. They had every confidence in the present Government, and believed that it would do its best to look after the interests of the minorities and the like, and to discharge the pledges that had been given. On the other hand, a government composed (he did not mention names but the implication was obvious) of people such as Stafford Cripps and possibly Samuel might well be inclined to try to force democracy and the rule of the majority on India. Their error would be that they would be regarding the Indian problem through the spectacles of the problem of England, whereas in fact the position was fundamentally and entirely different. Not only were the minorities here of intense importance in terms of numbers, they were divided by cultural, religious, and historical differences in a way that was not the case at Home, and it was no good trying to force principles that might work in the case of the United Kingdom on the wholly different conditions of India.

8. We discussed this up and down, and he agreed finally to let me have a letter setting out this point of view which I promised I would put to you and discuss with you. I have just had the letter and I am sending a copy of it to you by this bag. I hope to comment in greater detail on it when I have a little leisure. For the moment, I will not say that while I am, as you know, fully conscious of the argument on the other side, I cannot feel the apprehensions expressed by Jinnah on behalf of his community wholly lacking in substance; and I do feel increasingly, as I watch the reaction of the Muslims and the other minorities to the democratic experiment in this country, that we may have to go a good deal further than we have done in giving weight to their point of view, and that the fact that they are a numerical minority cannot be allowed to be a decisive factor in the framing of our policy in relation to them and to the numerical majority. At the same time, as we both

recognize, it will be very difficult to accept the claim of any minority, however substantial, to hold up for ever all constitutional progress, though in enunciating that proposition one has also to give weight to the fact that a constitutional advance on paper which is immediately followed by the most serious difficulties of a community of 90,000,000, and a virile community at that, would be short-sighted to a degree from our own point of view as well as from that of India. One thought that has crossed my mind when I read his letter this morning was that it might be of value at some forthcoming occasion to admit in the House of Lords, or in a speech in the country, that in considering this problem one did definitely have to give weight not only to the size of the minority—twice the population of the British India and as large as the whole of the present German Reich—but also to the deep cultural division and the fundamental cleavage on the religious issue. But these are delicate matters and require careful thought and the most deliberate phrasing, and I merely give you my first and very tentative reaction to them.

57. On Communal Demands: Linlithgow to Hubback, 13 November 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2216, NAI.

[Extract]

Meanwhile communal feeling has, if anything, shown sign of deepening; and I see very definite signs of some apprehension on the part of prominent Congress supporters at the increasing severity and the extent of Muslim claims, the latest stage being as you will have seen, a demand by Jinnah that the Muslim community must in future be accorded a position of equality, and not merely treated as a major minority. What he means by 'equality' is not very clear, though one suggestion which has been put to me is that it represents a demand for a veto by the Muslim element, however small in any Legislature on any legislation and not merely on legislation affecting the Muslims. I had done my best at the earliest stages in my discussions to warn the Congress that they had nothing to gain by a reopening of the Provincial Autonomy position. But those warnings have fallen on deaf ears and I could not but wish that they realized more fully how deep their vested interest is in the Act of 1935 and how much both in the Provinces and in the Centre they may have to lose by any reopening of the position which the Act represents. But we can but see how matters proceed...

58. Significance of 'Id' Prayer: Mr Jinnah's Broadcast

Leader, 16 November 1939.

Bombay

13 November 1939

Resolve to bring about complete harmony within our households, within our community and within our country—this is Mr Jinnah's message to the Muslims, broadcasting tonight. He said, 'Man, indeed is called God's Caliph in the Quran. And if that description of man is to be of any significance, it imposes upon us the duty to follow Quran to behave to others as God behaves to his mankind. In the widest sense of the word this duty is the duty to love and to forbear. On this day of Id there can be no worthier manifestation of the spirit that kindled in us throughout the fast prayer than to resolve to bring about a complete harmony within our household, within our community and within our country with all its variety of religion and creeds and work, whether in private life or public, for no selfish ends but for the greater good of all our countrymen and finally all human beings.'

Mr Jinnah added, 'All our leaders both Muslims and Hindus, continue to be pained at the communal strife. I shall not enter the history of its causes, but there will arise moments when minds of men will be worked up and then differences assume the character of conflict. It is at such moments that I shall ask you to remember your Id prayer and reflect for a while, if we could not avoid them in the light of the guidance given us by our Quran and that mighty spirit which is Islam.'

Referring to politics Mr Jinnah remarked, 'We have our rights and our claims in the future of India, but we shall not be obstinate about them, for obstinacy should be the negation of that spirit of love and toleration which should fall upon us on this Id day and whose blessings the Prophet commands us to communicate to others. But each one of us can serve our country by disciplining ourselves and discipline is the essence of this holy period.'

59. Congress Ministries and the Muslims: Fazlul Huq to Jawaharlal Nehru, 16 November 1939

Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, Vol. 20, 1939, NMML.

Park Circus

Calcutta

16 November 1939

Dear Mr Jawaharlal,

Thank you very much for your letter of 13 November, from Allahabad. Since I wrote to you last I have been in communication with my friends, both Hindu and Muslim, in the various provinces in order to collect materials for making out an effective tour programme. My idea is to collect reports as much as possible and then select a few typical cases. We can then go to the localities, send for the people, hear them, take evidence and if we find a *prima facie* case made out, we shall then decide what to do. I wish to make one point absolutely clear. It is not from a spirit of vindictiveness or from any feeling of spite against the Congress Ministers that I am insisting on this investigation. I am very definitely of opinion that there cannot be any lasting peace in the country unless the two major communities learn to trust each other and this they will not learn unless all causes of suspicion lurking in the mind of one against the other have been removed. If on investigation it is found that the charges were groundless and unfounded, it would be due to the Congress Ministers for the Mussalmans to say publicly that the Congress Ministers were not to blame. If on the other hand, the charges are well-founded we should take precautions that these things may not happen in the future. At the present moment the position is that the Muslims make the charges and the Congress Ministers deny them. There is no adjudication of the points at issue and different people hold different views as to whether the charges are true or not. All this has got to be removed and the question of guilt or innocence definitely cleared and decided.

I feel that if you and I could meet and visit some of the typical localities, we might be able to come to a definite conclusion. If on the whole we find that the Congress Ministers have made mistakes, it would be a graceful act on their part to make a public acknowledgement. If on the other hand we find that the main charges have failed, it will not be necessary to bother about the minor incidents, and we can at once declare that the Congress Ministers stand absolved of all blame.

I have been unwell and I am yet not quite fit for work. I do not agree with you when you say that the present UP or other Sec. 93 Governments are likely to incline against the Congress. I do not think this is the correct position. Somehow or other the officials, from the highest downwards,

have to bear the brunt of the charges and they are themselves in the position of accused. They will, therefore try to belittle the charges and to support the Congress not because they are in sympathy with the Congress but because they are both in the dock together. I am extremely busy at the present moment with the arrival of the new Governor and the opening of the two Houses of the Legislature for the winter session.

Hope you are keeping well.

Yours sincerely,

60. Congress–League Talks

Article by the Nawab of Chhatari, *Leader*, 16 November 1939.

16 November 1939

After reading the correspondence that passed between the Indian leaders and the Viceroy and which has been published with his Excellency's statement about the Delhi talks one cannot help regretting that another and a great opportunity has been missed by the Congress. The reply sent by Mr Jinnah to his Excellency the Viceroy makes it quite clear that when he met the Congress leaders he was informed by them finally that they had come to the conclusion that they could not discuss any question relating to the provincial fields or at the centre until their demand of a declaration of policy by the British was complied with. It is much to be regretted that our Congress leaders still look up on the communal question as subsidiary and do not attach that importance to it which it deserves, although in my opinion this is the main question to be solved, if we are really desirous to see a free and prosperous India.

Freedom—we may express it in any political terminology such as Swaraj, Dominion status, independence, free state etc.—cannot be given as a gift, it should come from within. I agree with Sir Samuel Hoare when he says that Dominion status is not a prize to be given to a good boy; but it is really the recognition of certain facts and conditions prevailing in a country, and for the creation of such conditions in India it is necessary that there should be communal harmony. I am glad that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr Mohammad Ali Jinnah are going shortly to resume their talks and let us hope and pray that they will succeed. My friends of the Congress should not miss this opportunity a second time. They missed it just after the elections. I hope they are not going to miss it again.

It is the All India Muslim League which can deliver the goods on behalf of the Musalmans; and at this juncture I feel that it is the duty of every Musalman to give his fullest and wholehearted support to the League to create a united Muslim voice. I have always been of the opinion that India's problems, many and varied as they are, should be dealt with in a statesman-like manner and on broad national basis, to the full satisfaction of all sections of her people, and not in a narrow partisan spirit; and I still believe as firmly as ever that a united demand on behalf of all the major communities and various important interests will be irresistible for Great Britain. It is no use blaming others when we have ourselves failed to create a suitable atmosphere.

61. Interview with Jinnah, Roger Lumley to Linlithgow, 25 November, 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2194, NAI.

In my telegram dated November the 21st, I mentioned that the message which you had asked me to convey to Jinnah, had been delivered by Low. I have since obtained from Low an account of

his interview with Jinnah and, although I believe that Low has already passed it on to Laithwaite, it may be useful if I repeat to you Low's account of his interview as he gave it to me.

2. Jinnah appeared interested in the information about the statement by the India League, and said he would look out for it and would certainly answer it if he thought it needed an answer from him. He said, he knew all about Krishna Menon who, he thought, was a relation of Nehru's and was, at any rate, nothing more than an agent of the Congress. I have not yet seen any sign of publication of the India League statement. It occurs to me that it may have been published in neutral countries but may have been held up by the censorship at Home or in India. If that is the position, it would, I suggest, be well to inform Jinnah, so that he can have an opportunity of answering the statement if it appears only in the neutral Press.

3. Low found Jinnah in a much more forthcoming mood than usual and thought that he was speaking with much greater freedom. In describing his interview with Gandhi at Delhi, he said that he found it impossible to make any progress and that he and Gandhi were really speaking a different language. Gandhi kept on harping on the need for a Constituent Assembly based on adult suffrage. When Jinnah asked him how he thought that Muslims should be represented, Gandhi replied in general terms to the effect that Congress should always safeguard the interests of Muslims. When Jinnah went on to suggest that he might not be able to agree to the Congress idea about Muslims representation, Gandhi retorted that then Jinnah would be obstructing. Having got no further on that question Jinnah dropped it, and then raised the issue as to what would be the position if the Muslims did not find it possible to agree with what the majority in a Constituent Assembly wanted. To that Gandhi again replied that the Muslims would be obstructing. In his exposition to Low, Jinnah pointed out that Gandhi's attitude simply amounted to this, that, unless he accepted everything that the Congress wanted about a Constituent Assembly, they would be charged with obstructing the national cause. He remained, therefore, emphatically opposed to any idea of a Constituent Assembly.

4. Jinnah added that he was very willing to co-operate with Hindus if the Muslim position were safeguarded, but that he was convinced that the Muslims would be squashed, if they agreed to the establishment of a Hindu Raj. Gandhi he considered to be 'the biggest Hindu in India', and he felt convinced that Gandhi, in particular has as his main object, the domination of India by Hindus.

5. Low has, I think, already passed on his impression that Jinnah was becoming rather impatient for your answer to his request for clarification of the points which he raised with you.

6. This information about Jinnah's attitude is, I expect, already well known to you, but it may help to confirm what you have heard from other sources.

62. The Muslim Problem in India: Syed Abdul Latif to Rajendra Prasad, 27 November 1939.

The Pakistan Issue, Lahore, 1943.

Yusuf Manzil, Adikmet
Hyderabad-Dn
27 November 1939

Dear Doctor Sahib,

Having been out of station, I could open your kind letter of the 15th instant only to-day; and I hasten to dispatch to you by this mail a copy of *The Cultural Future of India* which you have asked for.

Along with this, I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of *The Muslim Problem in India* in which the subject of the Cultural Future of India is more fully discussed. In fact, it is a supplementary study offering an outline of an alternative constitution for India, which though originally prepared for the consideration of the Muslim League some eight months ago, was eventually meant for the consideration of the Congress as well.

I am not a politician in any sense of the term and possess no credentials to speak for any particular political party in the country. The views which I have advanced therefore are to be taken as the views of one who in his own way and from a detached station has felt deeply over the dissensions which prevail among us and would like to terminate them even by drastic means, if necessary. The plan¹ for a federation of culturally homogeneous states is a plan for a lasting political unity of the country and not for disruption. You may not share that ideal, nor admit the background against which it is set; but the alternative constitution suggested as an escape from the present impasse, with its emphasis on a composite executive at the Centre as also in the Provinces, may deserve your kind and earnest consideration even without any reference to the ideal—an ideal conceived more in sorrow than in any wilful wish. After all, this is an individual opinion and is not intended to come in the way of any better solution that may be thought of as the result of your negotiations with the League. My only prayers are that Hindus and Muslims may enter upon a period of truly happy relations; for then, no one can or dare deny independence to our country.

Yours sincerely,
S.A. Latif

¹ The scheme was published in the *Leader* of 26 October. It set the outlines of a confederacy of culturally homogeneous states for India. The resolution attached to the scheme rejected the Act of 1935 as unacceptable to the Muslims on the ground that it was framed on the assumption that India was a composite nation and aimed to establish at the centre a government of single majority nationality, namely, the Hindus on whose sufferance the other nationalities would have to live, reducing the Muslims perpetually to the position of a helpless minority at the centre and in most of the British provinces.

Abdul Latif's scheme envisaged a constitution in which India was to be divided into two cultural zones, Muslims and Hindus. The North-West block consisting of Sind, Baluchistan, the Punjab, the North West Frontier Province and Kashmir, Khairpur with Bhawalpur the North-East block with Bengal and Assam; the Delhi-Lucknow block to be carved out of UP and the Deccan block of the dominion of Hyderabad and Berar with a strip of territory restored to them running down via Kurnool and Cuddapa to the City of Madras from the Muslim zone while the rest of India is to resolve itself into cultural zones for the Hindus on linguistic basis, namely Bengali, Hindi, Oriya, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Mahratta, Telugu, Tamil, Canarese and Malayalam or in any manner the Hindus may decide upon.

Regarding the Hindu minorities in North-Western block the scheme suggested that several Hindu and Sikh Indian States situated therein, with the boundaries of the States of Kashmir and Jammu altered in certain respects and with the Kangra Valley annexed to it, would accommodate the Hindus and Sikhs of the block while Amritsar was to be converted into a free city for the Sikhs.

In the same manner Muslims living outside the main zones in Rajputana, Gujarat and Malwa were to be concentrated in the Muslim Indian States situated in those areas and in a newly-constituted free city of Ajmer. The Muslims below the Vindhya and Satpuras scattered all over the south numbering more than 12 million were to be concentrated in the Deccan block.

[Enclosure: I]

Alternative Constitution

In the following pages, I have outlined a constitution for India which may mark the first step towards the realization of the zonal ideal described above. That outline may as well be considered on its own merits without reference to any such ideal, and as an immediate solution to the problem before us.

In the first place, the proposed constitution gives to every provincial federal unit as full an autonomy as is possible under the circumstances and adequately safeguards the rights of the Indian States and their rulers by reducing the federal list of subjects to a bare minimum. As a corollary to this, it provides for zonal or regional Boards for contiguous federal units possessing common affinities to evolve common policies in respect of subjects of cultural and economic importance common to them, leaving the individual units to legislate in the light of the policies so evolved. *In the second place*, the proposed constitution gives to every provincial unit and the centre a composite stable executive with an agreed policy instead of a parliamentary executive in the English sense as provided for in the Act of 1935. *Lastly*, it provides a machinery whereby cultural and economic security may be afforded to the Muslim and other minorities at the centre as well as in the federal units.

These features may be considered *seriatim*.

Provincial Autonomy

We know that there is a body of opinion which supports the theory that in a federation the centre should retain as much of residuary power as possible. In other words the centre should be quite strong. Such a theory could not hold good in a sub-continent like India. In fact, the idea of a federation composed of units of diversified character and following diversified systems of government ranging from autocracy to democratic autonomy would not be a federation in the strict sense of the term. It would at best become an arrangement to keep together units which owe allegiance in some manner to an Imperial centre. The truth is that India is vast and varied enough to be quite capable of forming itself into several natural federations on different cultural lines. But at this stage, it is necessary in the highest interests of the country as a whole that the divergent units should not all be yoked together except in matters which are absolutely common to all, such as defence, foreign affairs, commerce, communications and the like. To attempt to bring them all under a single administration for other purposes also, would be tantamount to a sort of forcible usurpation of the power which should vest in the federal units. The following are the chief directions in which this interference will make itself felt adversely:

1. India is a land where several cultures subsist side by side. There are, broadly speaking, two great cultures, the Muslim and the Hindu, each of which very often require separate treatment by legislation and otherwise. The Hindu culture is in reality a loose federation of several cultures marked by differences in languages and customs, social habits and laws. For instance a Nambudiri Brahman of Malabar has nothing in common with a Machwa Brahman of Bengal or a half-Muslim Brahman Pandit of Kashmir. Each in his own individual jurisdiction supplies a background to the social life of the Hindus peculiar to the part of the country where he lives. Such examples can be easily multiplied to demonstrate the vertical as well as the oblique fissures cutting and separating the Hindu society throughout the country. If, suppose, a subject of cultural bearing should be adopted by legislation at a centre, it will mean forcing on the whole country a culture which would be, to say the least, quite inconsistent with the cultures of several units prevailing at the same time in numerous places! And when the fact is taken into consideration that a great community like the Musalmans will come under the purview of such a legislation, it is bound to result in a conflict and its accompanying stress and strain. The object and aim of the proposed scheme is to avoid such unpleasant contingencies and social disturbances. The provision holds good as much in the economic field as in other fields.

2. It is a matter of common knowledge that the Indian States are afraid to join the federation chiefly because they apprehend that the federal interference would operate adversely on their internal independence. As no federation would succeed unless and until the Indian States willingly

and cheerfully join to work it, it would be the height of statesmanship to allay fears of the States in every respect. Under the proposed scheme they will have the necessary sense of security such as would make them willing and contented units of the federation.

3. From the standpoint of Muslims as of other minorities, it is necessary that the residuary powers should vest only in the units, and in the proposed regional boards to the necessary extent. As minorities in most federal units, the position of the Muslims would be one of comparative dependence on the Hindu majority. If the centre also should exercise its jurisdiction in matters which might as well be dealt with by the constituent units, the position of the Muslims and other minorities will become more difficult, because under the constitution of the Act of 1935, the majority community of India would not fail to dominate at the centre as well as, in the units subjecting the minorities to the treatment, as it were, of a double-edged sword. Such autonomy as the Muslims might have under the Act in a few provinces would become useless to them by reason of the domination of the great Hindu majority in the important subjects of the concurrent list. Should the 'federal list' be confined to a bare minimum of items, it would certainly be a great relief as it would give a sense of security to minority communities as well as to hundreds of Indian States both large and small. After all, in a country where a single homogeneous nation is impossible to evolve, any attempt on the part of a majority community to seize power at the centre in the name of nationalism would be undiluted high handedness which the Musalmans who had long ruled that community could not brook under any circumstances whatsoever.

Zonal Boards

With full autonomy conceded to federal units by reducing the federal list of subjects to a bare minimum, and by eliminating in consequence the concurrent list altogether, the need will be felt for co-ordinating the activities of such contiguous units as enjoy common affinities in respect of subjects of cultural and economic importance common to them. To meet this need zonal or regional boards are suggested to enable such groups to evolve common policies on common problems, leaving the individual federal units, whether Indian States or Provinces, to legislate in the light of the common policies so evolved. The formation of sub-regional boards will dispense with the need of resolving such groups into sub-federations which will simply multiply administrative and legislative paraphernalia in the country.

The Executive

It has already been explained how a parliamentary executive in India would in practice degenerate into a permanent communal executive responsible only to a single majority community on whose sufferance all minorities would have to live. To safeguard against the possible tyranny of communal majority, the proposed alternative constitution provides for a stable though composite executive suited to the peculiar new conditions demonstrated above. Such an executive following an agreed policy would assure peace and order to the country in general, and a complete sense of security to the minority communities in particular. The executive must needs be not only strong but also quite stable; otherwise it would reflect the changing attitude of the legislature from time to time—the legislature which under the existing system of franchise is bound to be dominated by one or other community in the provinces, and wholly and permanently by a single community at the centre. Since such a stable executive could not be composed of members belonging to the majority party alone but should necessarily be drawn from all parties or groups, its policy would not be other than the result of a compromise or of an attempt to reconcile different points of view. The general lines of such an agreed policy would have to be laid down by mutual agreement in a

Conference of representatives of political organizations of the different communities and that on an all-India basis.

The executive called 'Composite Government' of the character adumbrated above is different from the executive called 'Coalition Government'. The latter comes into existence where there is a plurality of parties or groups, none of which nor two or more of which, command an absolute majority. Such a contingency is not possible under circumstances that can be envisaged at present. In most provincial legislatures we have but a big party which represents only the majority community. It is only when there is a split in the big party that coalition comes in as in Bengal, where the Muslims are divided and where consequently the government is very weak. The Executive of a Coalition Government therefore is always an unstable government, and even when it is reshuffled, it still be a coalition government. In order therefore the peace and order—the two primary objects of every Government—should be maintained effectively, more particularly when there is conflict of interests and cultures between the two leading communities neither of whom is willing to accept the political domination of the other, a composite stable government, such as exists in America and follows an agreed policy is the only form of government that is likely to arrest the disintegration that has already set in as a result of the Act of 1935. The form of such a composite stable government can be settled between the communities concerned, although as a basis of discussion we have suggested that the Prime Minister in each province should be elected by the entire legislature to function during the lifetime of the legislature itself. He should be free to select his own colleagues on the executive in terms of the ratio to be fixed on an all India basis by agreement between the communities concerned. The Executive selected by the elected Premier will not be removable by any adverse vote of the legislature and will devote itself exclusively to the welfare of the people by following a policy agreed by the members composing the government.

Safeguards

Under the section dealing with safeguards, the proposed transitional constitution has suggested ways and means whereby the interests of the Muslims, as well as of other minorities, may adequately be safeguarded both in legislation and administration; and they are so self-explanatory that they need not be discussed here at any length.

The scheme which follows is given in the form in which it was prepared for the consideration of the All-India Muslim League.

Outline of Alternative Constitution

The transitional constitution for India will have to fit into the conception of the ultimate federation and must lead to it. This will necessitate the creation of certain new Provinces on cultural or linguistic lines *without involving immediate exchange of population*. The new Provinces may be constituted even piecemeal, but one of them, at any rate, should be carved immediately out of the present United Provinces. It should be formed with a view to resolving it eventually into a Muslim zone and a permanent home for all the Muslims living at present in UP and Bihar.

Transitional Federation

It is for the 'Constitutional' lawyers to work out the details of the transitional constitution, but any such constitution should embody the following provisions:

1. In the Preamble, it must be clearly brought out that the aim of the transitional federal constitution laid down is to lead India to a federation of culturally homogeneous states.

2. Legislation: (a) The Federal Legislative List should be reduced to a minimum number of items and be confined only to subjects which concern the common political and economic interests of India as a whole.
- (b) All other subjects should form the Provincial list subject to the following proviso:

Regional Boards

There may be subjects of cultural and economic importance common to contiguous federal units and it will be found useful to have for them Regional or Zonal Boards to evolve common policies, leaving the individual federal units to legislate in the light of the common policies so evolved.

Three of the zones may be constituted as follows:

1. North-West Zone composed of Sind, Baluchistan, NWFP, Kashmir, Khairpur, and the Indian States of the Punjab Agency.
2. North-East Zone composed of Bengal and Assam.
3. The Dominions of Hyderabad.

The rest of India may be resolved into linguistic zones even as the Congress may wish.

The above arrangement has two advantages:

- (i) It will remove Cultural Legislation from federal control.
- (ii) It will develop a zonal or regional sense necessary to evolve culturally autonomous states, which the transitional constitution is to lead to.

Safeguards for Muslims

Whatever be the nature of the transitional federal constitution, whether consisting of newly-formed units as suggested above or of units in their existing form, the Muslims will need the under mentioned safeguards to be incorporated in the Constitution:

A. Representation on Legislature

1. The system of separate electorates for Muslims should be maintained, as well as the existing proportion of Muslims in the several Legislatures.
2. The inclusion of the Indian States in an All-India Federation should be made dependent upon their returning to the Central Legislatures a sufficient quota of Muslims so as to allow to their community, in view of their political importance, and particularly of their predominant share in the defence of the country, at least a third of the seats at the Centre.
3. If the proposed Zonal or Regional Boards are established, the Muslims should be allowed adequate and effective representation commensurate with their total strength in the Legislatures of the several units composing each zone.

B. Legislation

All subjects touching their religion, personal law and culture will be the exclusive concern of the Muslim members of the Legislature concerned, constituted into a Special Committee for the purpose. The strength of the Committee should be augmented by a third by co-opting representative Muslims, learned in Muslim Law and Religion. The decisions of such a Committee should be accepted by the whole Legislature. If such decisions, should they seem to affect the interests of other communities, might on reference made by the head of the Administration be reviewed by the Legislature as a whole, but no amendments shall be permissible which should affect the basis of the legislative enactment.

C. Executive

The Executive Government of the Ministers in each province or at the centre should not be drawn from the majority party alone as is the vogue in homogeneous democratic countries like England. Here in India, it is the majority community which permanently returns the majority of members to the Legislature and, in as much as the majority community, namely, the Hindus, unfortunately differ from the Muslims, the next largest community in the country, in almost every detail of domestic and social life, the governance of the country by a permanent majority in the Legislature resolves itself into the governance of the country by the majority community only, and cannot be expected to be a Government of the whole people.

The executive that needs to be chosen for every province and the centre should, in the present stage, be a composite executive representing Hindus and Muslims with an agreed policy acceptable to both, and not liable to be turned out by the Legislature. That should be the arrangement at any rate, until India resolves itself into a federation of culturally autonomous states, when alone true democracy may take its birth in the country, and responsible Government justified.

Under the transitional constitution, therefore, the executive should be not a parliamentary executive in the English sense, but a 'stable executive' independent of the Legislature as in the great democracy of the United States of America, but the Prime Minister instead of being elected directly by the people as the President in USA, should be elected by the entire Legislature, and should remain in office during the life of the legislature, and will not be removable by it. He will choose his colleagues or ministers in the interests of good government from the members of all groups in the legislature, an equitable number of whom should be Muslims enjoying the confidence of the Muslim members of the legislature concerned and should be selected from a panel suggested by them.

2. Of the two provinces into which UP will be divided the Prime Minister for the Muslim province should be a Muslim, as this area will have in the transitional period to prepare itself to resolve into a Muslim zone, and will have its policy to be directed by a Muslim.

3. In the case of the portfolios affecting Law and Order and Education which have to deal with problems over which cultural differences arise, provision should be made to have a Minister and an Assistant Minister and to appoint a Muslim to either of the two posts, in order that the Government may have the benefit of his steadying influence.

D. Public Service Commission

It should be provided in the Constitution that in all provinces where the Muslims are in a minority and at the centre, one at least of the members of the Public Service Commission should be a Muslim, part of whose duty shall be to see that the ratio fixed for the Muslims in public services is properly adhered to in practice by the Government concerned.

E. Judiciary

The Personal Law of the Muslims should be administered by Muslim judges.

F. Muslim Board of Education and Economic Uplift

It should be provided in the constitution that in each provincial unit a Muslim Board should be established to control and supervise the cultural side of the education of Muslims, their technical and industrial training, and to devise measures for their economic and social uplift. For this purpose, a proper budgetary provision shall be made.

G. Special Taxation

If for any special object, the Muslims are willing to tax themselves, the necessary legislation should be passed.

Machinery to Effect Exchange of Population

One of the objects of the transitional constitution is to facilitate and prepare the ground for the migration of Muslims and the Hindus into the zones specified for them so as to develop them into culturally homogeneous states. During the transitional period migration should be on a voluntary basis. For this the necessary legislation will have to be passed for each region, and a machinery set up to organize and regulate this voluntary migration. The proposed constitution will therefore have to provide for the appointment of a Royal Commission to lay down a suitable programme of gradual exchange of population.

The result of voluntary migration may be reviewed from time to time and if it should be found that it has eliminated the cultural clashes between the Muslims and the Hindus to an appreciable extent and given them a sense of security wherever they need it, or has brought about a change of heart in either camp, the question of compulsory migration may be put off indefinitely, and the voluntary method adhered to for a further term.

Syed Abdul Latif

Hyderabad-Deccan,
April 1939

[Enclosure: 2]

Camp—Bajajwadi, Wardha
2 January 1940

My dear Dr Latif,

I have been studying your *Muslim Problem in India*, which you were good enough to send me some time back. In order to understand the full significance and the implications of the scheme of cultural distribution, I shall be obliged if you kindly furnish me with some more details regarding the points mentioned below:

1. Do you include whole of the Punjab as at present constituted in the NW Block, or do you exclude any portion of it? It is not quite clear what are the areas, which are to be excluded from the NW Block and what the areas and population of the excluded portions will be.

2. What are the districts of Bengal, which you exclude from the NE Muslim Block?

3. What are the districts or states which will constitute the Delhi–Lucknow Block? What would be their area and how is the number of 12 millions of Musalmans to be settled in it calculated? It seems that you include in it the cities of Delhi, Agra, Cawnpore and Lucknow.

4. Am I right in understanding that in the Deccan Block, you include the whole of the Nizam's State and Berar? What would be the area of the strip of territory running through the districts of Kurnool, Cuddapa, Chittor, N. Arcot, and Chingalpet down to the city of Madras and what is the existing population of the area to be so joined to the 4th Block?

After the exchange of population, when it is completed, what do you contemplate to be the area and the population of each block, whether Hindu or Muslim? I am, of course, assuming that there would be no Muslim in any Hindu area and no Hindu or Sikh in any Muslim area.

5. Another question, which has not been, as far as I am able to see, discussed, is the question of cost of transfer of populations. In framing the scheme, you must have taken all this into

consideration and I should like to be enlightened on the estimated cost of transfer. Other questions, which arise in this connection are:

- (a) Is the emigrant to be paid anything beyond the cost of transport? It is assumed that he will carry with him all his movables and will be provided with land in the block to which he is transferred. Will he be compensated for the immovable, which he will leave behind?
- (b) Who will pay the cost? The Block to which he is transferred or the Block from which he goes or both—and if the last, in what proportion?

6. After once the different Blocks have been constituted, will Hindus be permitted to go and settle in Muslim Blocks and carry on business and *vice-versa*? Will Muslims be permitted to have purely religious propaganda for conversion purposes in Hindu regions or not and *vice-versa*?

7. It seems that you have allowed the Harijans to remain where they like whether in the Hindu zones or Muslim regions. Does it mean that you treat them as non-Hindus? In giving the figures of population I shall ask for separate figures for Muslims and Harijans, whom you permit to remain in Muslim zones.

So far as the areas and population are concerned I could perhaps work them out myself, if exact description of the Blocks in detail is available, but, I believe, you must have got them out in framing the scheme. I should be obliged if you could supply me the information and save me the trouble of working them out. As I am at present engaged in studying your scheme along with other schemes of a similar kind, I have taken the liberty to write to you for additional information, so that I may form correct opinion and understand, as I have said all the implications of the scheme.

I am staying here at Wardha till about the 15th of this month and I shall be obliged for your reply here.

Yours sincerely,
Rajendra Prasad

63. Liaquat Ali Khan's Presidential Address at the Darbhanga Muslim League Conference

Searchlight, 28 November 1939.

25 November 1939

Liaquat Ali Khan, honorary Secretary of the All India Muslim League, in the course of his presidential address delivered at the Darbhanga Muslim League Conference on November 25 said:

As soon as the Congress had accepted office after getting an assurance that Governors would not use their special powers and interfere in the day-to-day work of the Ministries they set themselves with a great zeal to the task of solving the communal problem. The solution of the communal problem is vital for the salvation of India. Indeed, it would have been a great achievement if Congress Ministries could have attained that object. They would have then justified their claim to be the popular Government.

Unfortunately they took a wrong course. Instead of trying to solve the problem in a spirit of give and take, they at once resorted to force with a view to curbing the Muslims, suppress their sense of individuality and silence their dissentient voice. Had not the Muslims in India been a nation of ninety millions, with a glorious past and the future full of great possibilities, the Hindu Governments would have achieved their evil designs, and the other minorities of India are numerically small and too weak to defend themselves. But the Muslims took up the gauntlet

thrown by the Hindus through the Congress. They organized themselves miraculously and fought not only their own battle but championed the cause of all the minorities.

The Congress Ministries instead of settling the communal differences intensified them greatly. Hindus were led to believe through local Congress Committees that Hindu Raj was established in India and they really began to behave like rulers. In rural areas where Muslims were in minority they were insulted and harassed by Hindus in numerous ways. The Muslim Press was suppressed. Muslims' religious and political activities were interfered with by Government, and their fundamental rights and civil liberties were trampled upon. Firing, lathi charge and arrests were the order of the day; no doubt in some cases official inquiries were made, but the League had as much faith in the official inquiries as the Congress had in similar ones, which the British Government used to set up before the advent of the Congress regime. This state of affairs made the Muslims realize that the system of Government incorporated in the Government of India Act of 1935 was entirely unsuited to Indian conditions. It is undemocratic and is designed to establish the hegemony of one section over the whole of India. It has become quite evident to the Muslims that Hindus would never co-operate with them under any form of government and share power with them as equals.

This has led to the idea of partitioning India into Hindu and Muslim zones. It was stressed at the Karachi and Meerut Conferences and is still considered as the best panacea of the communal problem. Of late, Gandhi has vehemently opposed the scheme in an article published in the *Harijan* and has held it as a contribution to the imperialistic growth. He has gone to the length of indirectly threatening a civil war in India. Gandhi further says, 'if we Hindus and Muslims and others are to evolve democracy, we shall do only by the whole nation speaking its mind through its representatives elected under the broadest franchise possible, and that either through British goodwill or in teeth of its opposition.' Now let us examine Gandhi's democracy. Out of 340 million population of India there are 90 million Muslims, 10 million other minorities and the rest are Hindus. The number of the representatives of the various communities being in proportion to their population the Hindu representatives far out-number the representatives of all the communities taken together. The representatives of 100 million Muslims and other minorities and the representatives of 100 million Hindus out of 240 million would nullify each other and the representatives of the remaining Hindus would rule over the whole of India. Thus the Muslims and the other minorities would have absolutely no say in affairs of their country. It is, therefore, no democracy which Gandhi is advocating. It is despotism pure and simple of one section of the Hindu community.

It is a libel against the Muslim League and whole nation to allege that they are against freedom and democracy. Freedom and democracy are innate to the Muslims and the League stands for them. But the Muslims are not agreed to acknowledge the Hindus as majority because the followers of Hindu religion are more in number. Democracy has never recognized such claims. If we Hindus, Muslims and others are ever to evolve democracy in India, it can only be through a system of representation which eliminates the possibilities of any community getting the upper hand.

In the end, I would like to point out one more thing. You should not imagine that the Congress terrorism would not be repeated. During the last two-and-a-half years, many of our misunderstandings have been removed and we had the occasion to see the Congress in its true colour. There is a great danger that in case the demands of the Muslim League as regards the revision of the constitution are not fully carried out the majority Government would again revert to power.



64. Resignation of Congress Governments: Muslims Asked to Celebrate Event, Day of Thanksgiving on 22 December

Leader, 9 December 1939.

Bombay
6 December 1939

Mr M.A. Jinnah issued the following statement:

I wish Mussalmans all over India to observe Friday, 22 December as the day of deliverance and thanksgiving as a mark of relief that the Congress Governments have at last ceased to function. I hope that the provincial, district and primary Leagues all over India will hold public meetings and pass the following resolution with such modifications as they may be advised and offer prayers by way of thanksgiving for being delivered from the unjust Congress regime. I trust that all public meetings will be conducted in an orderly manner with all due sense of humility and nothing should be done which will cause offence to any other community because it is the high command of the Congress that is primarily responsible for the wrongs that have been done to the Mussalmans and other minorities.

This public meeting of the Mussalmans of Bombay records its opinion that the Congress Ministry has conclusively demonstrated and proved the falsehood of the Congress claim that it represents all interests justly and fairly by its decidedly anti-Muslim policy. It is the considered opinion of this meeting that the Congress Ministry has failed to safeguard the rights and interests of the Mussalmans and other minorities and interests.

That the Congress Ministry both in the discharge of their duties of the administration and in the legislature have done their best to flout the Muslim opinion, to destroy the Muslim culture and have interfered with their religious and social life and trampled upon their economic and political rights.

That in matters of differences and disputes the Congress Ministry invariably have sided with, supported and advanced the cause of the Hindus in total disregard and the prejudice of the Muslim interests.

The Congress Governments constantly interfered with the legitimate and routine duties of the district officers even in petty matters to the serious detriment of the Mussalmans and thereby created an atmosphere which spread the belief amongst the Hindu public that there was established a Hindu Raj, and this emboldened the Hindus, mostly Congressmen, to ill-treat the Muslims at various places and interfere with their elementary rights of freedom.

This meeting therefore expresses its deep sense of relief at the termination of the Congress regime in various provinces and rejoices in observing this day as the day of deliverance from tyranny, oppression and injustice during the last two and a half years and prays to God to grant such strength, discipline and organization to Muslim India as to successfully prevent the advent of such a Ministry again and to establish a truly popular Ministry which would do even justice to all communities and interests.

This meeting urges upon his Excellency the Governor of Bombay and his Council of Advisors to inquire into the legitimate grievances of the Mussalmans and the wrongs done to them by the outgoing Congress Ministry and redress the same at the earliest moment in accordance with the announcements that have been made by the Governors in taking over the Government of various provinces under section 93 of the Government of India Act of 1935, and thus assure the people that the new regime stands for even justice to all communities and interests concerned.

65. Constituent Assembly: Mr Jinnah's Statement

Leader, December 1939 and *Hindustan Times*, 9 December 1939.

Bombay
8 December 1939

Commenting on Gandhi's latest statement to the *News Chronicle* on the Constituent Assembly idea, Mr M.A. Jinnah, President of the All India Muslim League, said:

I would have preferred to remain silent. But I am compelled to counteract the vigorous one-sided propaganda of the Congress both in India and abroad and in fact it is only to defend the Muslim League that I speak at all.

It was not very long ago that Mr Gandhi gave an interview to an American journalist when he said in reply to a question as to what was his view towards the parties in a democratic India. Mr Gandhi said that there was only one party which could deliver the goods and that was the Congress. To a further question that there was the Muslim League and what about that, Mr Gandhi said: 'I would not accept any other party except the Congress.' Then it was pointed out to him that if there was to be only one party in India the Government would be Fascist and not democratic, Mr Gandhi replied: 'Damn it, by whatever name you call it, there can be only one party in India and that is the Congress.' Suddenly Mr Gandhi, who was always sceptical about the Constituent Assembly, has now become an enthusiastic convert and its champion. He has been misrepresenting and insinuating motives to the Muslim League recently, for instance, that the League is an obstacle in the progress of the country and that it is out to sell itself to the highest bidder. In his periodical articles published in the *Harijan*, he generally indulges in a campaign of polemics and metaphysics, *Ahimsa* and truth. But his interview to the *News Chronicle* is for the consumption of the British public.

A more disingenuous statement it would be difficult to find coming from Mr Gandhi and it is a pity it comes from one who is a votary of Truth. His sudden affection for a Constituent Assembly is on a par with what he has only striven for two decades. Now that the Congress stands exposed, that it does not represent India and that it is pleased suddenly to stand for a Constituent Assembly which in the present condition of India will mean a second and larger edition of the Congress. Having brushed aside the Indian princes and ignoring their existence altogether, he (Mr Gandhi) proceeds to lay down a most extraordinary proposition. 'I fail to see,' he said, 'why Britain's intention about India should be dependent upon Muslim, Hindu or any other opinion. The only opinion that counts is Indian opinion, not even the Congress opinion. India's opinion can be ascertained by the free vote of her people. The only true and democratic method is to ascertain their will through adult suffrage or any agreed equivalent.'

The first question will be when he says 'any agreed equivalent to adult suffrage', between whom is that agreement to be arrived at? Secondly, if Britain is not to depend on opinion, then what is India's opinion?

Mr Gandhi then proceeds to say: 'So far as the Congress is concerned, the people or the princes of India should be represented precisely on the same footing as those of British India.' Who will arrange that? And how the electorates are to be established there? And what is to happen to the treaty rights and relationship between the British Government and the Indian Princes? Then he proceeds: 'Muslims and other accepted minorities may be represented by separate electorates if necessary.' This is a concession but there is no grace in it when he further proceeds to state that it should be done in the exact proportion to their numbers. He knows perfectly well that they will be in a hopeless minority in the Constituent Assembly of Mr Gandhi's conception where

he hopes to get a brute majority against the Muslims, including other minorities. He makes a further concession that 'they will determine what is required for their protection'. Is the Constituent Assembly to be bound by the minority vote as to what is required for their protection and for each minority? And then comes the omnibus clause which is fundamentally wrong and once more shows blind arrogance, when he says that in all matters of common interest the composite majority decision should prevail. Therefore the Muslims and other minorities will have to submit to the verdict of the Assembly as to the nature, character and the form of the future constitution of India, which will presumably be dictated to by Mr Gandhi on behalf of the Congress. As an instance, Muslims and other minorities may prefer a bicameral legislature whereas the Congress controlled majority of the Assembly may decide against it which, according to Mr Gandhi, will be final.

But evidently his new born faith in the Constituent Assembly is getting shaken a bit already because he says if a better way than the Constituent Assembly could be found 'for knowing the will of the people, so far as I know, the Congress will accept it without hesitation.' This is hopeful.

Mr Gandhi is neither concerned with the size of the country nor the illiteracy of the masses. A truly representative assembly presupposes that in order to faithfully express the judgment of the people it can only be constituted provided you have a fully developed public opinion, an electorate educated and experienced, free from superstition and capable of judging the vital political issues affecting the country, and not as India stands today composed of castes, creeds, superstitions, provincial jealousies and quite apart from the main division of British India and Indian States. The Assembly proposed by Mr Gandhi would at best, therefore be a packed body manoeuvred and managed by the Congress caucus. It is surprising when Mr Gandhi complacently says that an 'election campaign will itself be sufficient education for the purpose of broadly knowing the popular will.' But have we not had sufficient evidence under the present constitution though in a smaller and more informed electorates; and what about the experience of the Congress with four-anna franchise which was eloquently condemned of abuses of power and malpractices by Mr Gandhi himself. It will not be the 'popular will' as Mr Gandhi himself professes, but it will be the will of one community which is in an overwhelming majority. But then he is anxious as a friend of Britain, bound by many personal ties, that she should come out victorious, not because of superiority in the use of arms but because of her will to be just all along the line. Hence his anxiety to advise Britain to follow him to secure success of the war.

Mr Gandhi's notion of justice is to follow what he advises, then alone it can be just. I am constrained to say I wish Mr Gandhi will stop airing views which change from day to day and week to week which consistently perpetuate inconsistencies, and apply his mind to the only and one question, namely, settling the Hindu-Muslim question, as he, of all the Congress leaders, is best fitted to represent the Hindus as such and he can deliver the goods on behalf of the Hindus and bring about complete adjustment between the two major communities and the rest will follow. I need hardly reiterate that I am willing to help to the utmost of my power on behalf of the Muslims towards an honourable solution.

Apart from this academic discussion about Constituent Assembly, it shows colossal ignorance, both historic and constitutional, to expect a foreign power that is dominating this country to sign its death warrant. The Constituent Assembly can only be real when it has got the sovereign authority of the people behind it, forged by the people who are in position to convene such a supreme national body, whose decision and verdict could be respected and honoured and whose fiat and writs could be enforced. It is puerile to ask the British Government in the first instance to call a Constituent Assembly of another nation and afterwards have the honour and privilege of placing

the constitution framed by this supreme assembly of India on the statute book of the British Parliament.

66. The Communal Issue: Jinnah to Jawaharlal Nehru, 13 December 1939
Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, File No. W1-39, Part 1, NMML.

*Mount Pleasant Road
Malabar Hill
Bombay
13 December 1939*

Dear Jawaharlal,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 9th December I did not know where to address my reply to you as your movements were reported in the press.¹ The latest announcement is that you are arriving in Bombay on the 14th of December and I am therefore sending this letter to your Bombay address. I quite agree with you 'that there must be some common ground for discussion, some common objectives aimed at for that discussion, to yield fruit—that is the very reason why I made it clear in our conversation at Delhi in October last to Mr Gandhi and yourself. First, so long as the Congress is not prepared to treat the Muslim League as the authoritative and representative organization of the Mussalmans of India it was not possible to carry on talks regarding the Hindu-Muslim settlement as that was the basis laid down by the Working Committee of the All India Muslim League, and second that we cannot endorse the Congress demand for the declaration as laid down in the resolution of the Working Committee confirmed by the All India Congress Committee of 10th October 1939, apart from the nebulous and impracticable character of it till we reach an agreement with regard to the minority problem. The Muslim League was also not satisfied with the declaration made by the Viceroy. If happily we could settle the Hindu-Muslim question then we would be in a position to evolve an agreed formula for a demand of a declaration by His Majesty's Government that would satisfy us. Neither the first nor the second suggestion of mine was acceptable to Mr Gandhi or to yourself at Delhi but you were good enough to express your wish that you would like to meet me again and I said that I would be always glad to see you. In reply to your letter of the 1st December expressing your wish to see me in Bombay I inform you that I shall be in Bombay till the 3rd week of December and I shall be glad to see you, and I can only say that if you desire to discuss the matter further I am at your disposal.

As regards your reference to the Bijnor incident I am sure that you will agree with me that it requires a thorough judicial examination and enquiry before any conclusion can be arrived at, and it is hardly worth our while to deal with one instance, for in my judgment the whole working of the constitution and our charges against the Congress Government must be thoroughly examined by a Royal Commission.²

Yours sincerely,

¹ The letter was addressed to c/o Mr Hathee Singh, Sakina Mansions, Cumbala Hill, Bombay.

² For Jawaharlal Nehru's reply, see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 10, pp. 399–400.



67. The Hindu–Muslim Tangle: Jinnah to Jawaharlal Nehru,
15 December 1939

Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, File No. W1-39, Part 1, NMML.

*Mount Pleasant Road
Malabar Hill
Bombay
15 December 1939*

Dear Jawahar,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 14th December 1939;¹ and I am sorry to say that you have not appreciated my position with regard to the second point. I did not say that Muslim League can not endorse the Congress demand for a declaration from the British Government. What I have said was that we can not endorse the Congress demand for *the* declaration as *laid down* in the resolution of the Working Committee and confirmed by the All-India Congress Committee of the 10th October 39 for the reasons I have already specified in my letter.

If this resolution of the Congress can not be modified in any way and as you say that personally you would be entirely opposed to my attempt at variation of it and as you make it clear that you are wholly unable to treat with the Muslim League as the authoritative representative organization of the Muslims of India, may I know in these circumstances what do you expect or wish we to do.

Yours sincerely

¹ *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 10, pp. 399–401.

68. ‘Deliverance Day’—A Vital Occasion For Recording Muslim
Solidarity Against Congress Conspiracy

Star of India, 16 December 1939.

The following statement has been issued by Mr M.A. Hafeez, Calcutta:

‘The Muslims all over India have been watching patiently the repercussions as are evinced in the anti-Muslim papers, on Mr Jinnah’s appeal to observe Friday, December 22, as the ‘Deliverance Day’ for their deliverance from the Hindu Congress oppression. The hurried and uncalled for statement of Mr A.R. Siddiqui attacking Mr Jinnah is supplying these papers with food for their tirades and crusades on the Muslims of India. It is something for Mr Siddiqui, that his statement did not go further and advice Mr Gandhi, Mr Patel or Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to quit their “guddies” for members of the younger generation. We wonder why there should be any advice to the Muslims at all: Why should there be the venomous outpourings by the Hindu Press urging the Muslims to desist from the observance of the “Thanksgiving Day”? Did the Muslims ever advise Mr Gandhi who now appears to be a great friend of Islam and the Muslims or his satellites to desist from observing “Bhagat Singh Day”, “Kakori Day”, “Independence Day”, “Flag Day” and thousand murderers, cut-throats, dacoits, etc. can be extolled on public platform and commended for their so-called “heroic” actions, which are nothing more than inciting the mob to violence? What harm is there if the peace-loving Muslims offering thanks to the Almighty for the deliverance of the Muslims from Congress “Zoolum”? This has become all the more necessary “now” since the defiant attitude of the Hindus and of men like Sardar Patel and others who say that the Pirpur Report is false and even deny having committed atrocities on the Muslims.

‘These denials are only the usual and accustomed outbursts of Congressmen to cover their own guilt. ... Communalism of the Congress Hindus is “nationalism” but an identical action by a Muslim is dubbed “communalism”.

‘The statements of the Krishok Proja members of the Bengal Assembly, who have always identified themselves in their actions and deeds as nothing other than the left hand of Congress, Mr Asaf Ali and other Congressite Muslims are well-known to the Muslims of India and they do not pay any heed, nor have they any respect for such Muslims. They are nothing but the mouth-pieces of the Congress.

‘We hope Muslim India should prove it not only to Indians but also to the outside world, that they are united in their stand and actions, are loyal to Mr Jinnah, and that they cannot be betrayed by one handful of Muslim camp-followers of the Congress by observing the “Day” in the fittest manner as occasion demands.’

69. How to Settle India’s Communal and Political Problems: Sikander Hyat Khan

Interview with the Lahore journalists, *Tribune*, 17 December 1939.

16 December 1939

On being questioned regarding his views about the proposal to convene a Constituent Assembly for the purpose of formulating a constitution for India and for settling the communal and minority questions, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, speaking to the journalists said:

‘Apart from administrative and mechanical difficulties in the way of this proposal, there are other weighty and cogent objections against it. For instance, in an Assembly to be really representative, the number of representatives for a vast country like India with a population of 350 millions, must at a very lowest computation involve election of at least 3,500 members. Moreover financial considerations alone would justify ruling out this devise because judging from the average expenditure in the last provincial general elections, an all-India election campaign would cost the candidates and the Parties they represent a fortune which a poor country like India can ill-afford.

‘Then there is the question of Indian States. How are these to be represented in such an Assembly? Any suggestion to ignore one-third of India, which is represented by these States, on the face of it would make the claim for such an Assembly to represent India as a whole untenable.

‘But these considerations apart, my main objection against the proposal is that it can hardly be expected to achieve the object which its sponsors seems to have in view. In the present atmosphere of the country and the mood of the various political parties and communities, it is inconceivable that an Assembly of 3,500 people would succeed in formulating an agreed constitution and to settle the outstanding communal and minority problems when even the first rank leaders have failed hitherto to agree on even the preliminaries which must necessarily precede more formal discussions, it is not difficult to visualize the results of deliberations among these 3,500 constituents. Having regard to the method of election contemplated by the exponents of the scheme, it is inevitable that the candidates should, in order to ensure their success, seek to enlist the support of their respective co-religionists by giving undue prominence to those very communal and religious issues and problems for the solution of which the Constituent Assembly is proposed to be constituted. One thing, however, can be safely predicted and that is that a country-wide election campaign under these conditions would further embitter inter-communal relations and might even result in open hostilities.

‘If the real object,’ said Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, ‘is to compose communal differences and to reconcile the just claims of the majority and the minorities in the future constitution of India, it would be more profitable to entrust this task to a few prominent and recognized leaders of the people. Provided there is a genuine desire among the leaders to grapple with and solve these problems—as I believe there is—it should be possible to limit the size of this informal conference to about a dozen leaders. There would of course, be no question of counting of heads in this conference as this select body of distinguished leaders would be required to find an agreed solution of the various political and communal problems. With mutual good-will and confidence, it should not be difficult for them to formulate agreed proposals which would meet with the approval of their countrymen. These proposals could then be submitted to the provincial legislatures for ratification.

‘In order to ensure that the minorities in the provincial legislatures would have real and effective voice in the ratification of the agreed solution, it might be laid down that the ratification would not be effective unless two-thirds, or perhaps even three-fourth of the members in each legislature endorse it. If to our misfortune even those selected accredited leaders do not succeed in finding out an agreed solution of our difficulties and problems, then, I am afraid, it would be futile to expect that a Constituent Assembly of 3,500 people, elected on communal tickets would ever be able to find a remedy for our chronic ills and troubles.’

Asked how he proposed to arrange the convening of this conference, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan said:

‘If this proposal commends itself to the leaders, it should not be difficult to devise a method for the selection of the personnel and to bring them together in an informal conference. If my proposal commends itself to Mahatma Gandhi and Mr Jinnah, then I would venture to make a further suggestion that they should jointly request His Excellency the Viceroy to help in the selection of the personnel and bringing them together in a conference.

‘In conclusion, I would earnestly and respectfully appeal to all the leaders and particularly those, who are at present engaged in a wordy warfare, that they should let bygones be bygones and not let themselves be side-tracked from their real and cherished objective of bringing about genuine harmony in the country and attaining that political ideal which every patriotic Indian has a view.’

70. Communal Zone—The Only Solution of Communal Problem: Muslim Educationists’ Reply to Mr Gandhi’s Argument

Star of India, 18 December 1939.

The following joint statement by such eminent educationists as Dr Mohd. Afzal Hussain Qadri, PhD, Dr Zakiuddin, PhD, Dr Burham Ahmed, PhD and Mr Ubaidullah Durrani, BA (Hon.) of Aligarh, intended as a reply to Mr Gandhi’s article in the *Harijan* entitled, ‘Opinions Differ’, is of compelling interest:

‘In a recent article in the *Harijan* entitled “Opinions Differ”, Mr Gandhi tries to reply to an Aligarh correspondent regarding the problem of Indian Muslims. He holds, in the alone, that the Indian Muslims are not in fact a separate nation by themselves and together with the Hindus can form a composite nation in a single Indian state run on the basis to widest possible franchise. He vehemently pleads against the partition of India and strongly depacated the ideal of the Muslims that they must have their own free and sovereign states. Mr Gandhi excludes religion from the basis of nationalism and lays entire emphasis on its territorial aspect. It is extremely difficult to

explain Mr Gandhi's failure to appreciate and understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. Islam as well as Hinduism are not only religions in a stricter sense of the word, but are in reality different and distinct social orders governing practically every individual and social aspect of their adherents. It should be clear beyond doubt that Hindus and Muslims cannot evolve a common nationality...

'Hindus and Muslims belong to two different cultures. They have totally different religions, philosophies, social customs, laws and literature. They neither inter-marry nor inter-dine and indeed, belong to two different civilizations which are in many aspect based on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Even the British who are so eager to form a single All-India Federation on basis of a uni-national state cannot refute the above facts....

A discontent is bound to occur wherever and whenever two culturally different people are yoked under a single state, one as minority and the other as majority. A number of instances like those of Great Britain and Ireland, Czechoslovakia and Poland can exemplify the above. Further, it is also too well-known that many geographical tracts which otherwise should have been called as one country, much smaller than the Indian sub-continent, have been divided into as many states as there are nations inhabiting them....

'Mr Gandhi stresses the historical unity of India even during the days of Muslim kings. We cannot accept his contention. No student of history can deny the fact that all along the last 1,200 years India has always been divided into a Hindu India and a Muslim India.... The present unity of India dates back only to the British conquest....

'We want to assure Mr Gandhi and our Hindu brethren that the ideal of having free sovereign Muslim state in India which now inspires a very large number of Muslims is not actuated by a spirit of hatred or revenge. It is initiated by an earnest desire of solving the Hindu-Muslim problem on equitable base and epitomizes the natural desire of Muslims of India to determine their future independently in the light of their own culture and history.

'Mr Gandhi holds that the partition of India will either help British Imperialism or bring about a Civil war. Neither of these appear to be logical or inevitable consequence. So far as the British are concerned, they have always been trying to keep India as a single state so as to play Hindus against the Muslims and "vice versa". It must serve their Imperialistic interests. The freedom of India entirely depends on the combined efforts of Hindus and Muslims. This they will do only when both of them can look forward to a free and honourable political and economic future. The political experience of the last 50 years, more especially of the last two years, has strengthened the faith of the Muslim in the above ideal which is now their paramount national resolve. Neither the fear of British bayonets nor the prospects of a bloody civil war can discourage them in their will to achieve free Muslim states in those parts of India where they are in majority.'

71. Mr Jinnah's Statement: Functions on 22 December, Pure Condemnation of Congress Regime

Leader, 20 December 1939. See Enclosure 1.

Bombay
17 December 1939

Mr M.A. Jinnah, President of the All India Muslim League, issued the following statement to the press:

In order to raise still further objections to the functions on 22 December, it is now being said that my move is anti-Hindu and will arouse communal passions.

I greatly regret that in order to discredit the Muslim League, the Congress should resort to such mischievous and dangerous propaganda. Let me once more point out that our relief is from the oppression of the Congress regime only and is not in any way directed against our Hindu fellow countrymen as a community.

In fact our chief objection to the attitude of the Congress is that it totally prevents the Hindu and the Muslim communities from working together in a manner honourable to both.

The Muslim League stands for justice and fair play to all, whether Muslim or of any other community, and I am glad to have received encouragement and support, not only from all minorities but from non-Congress Hindus also.

Let me, therefore, take this opportunity to appeal to all Indians who believe that the conditions in India necessitate popular, rather than party Governments which do justice to all sections of the people rather than irremovable majority to come forward now and to make known their views.

The functions on December 22 are not Muslim functions directed against their Hindu fellowmen as a community but a condemnation, pure and simple, of the regime of the Congress caucus.

I, therefore, most cordially invite all who support this attitude to join and participate in our meetings.

[Enclosure: 1]

Mr Jinnah's Latest (editorial), *Hindu*, 18 December 1939.

18 December 1939

Mr Jinnah has attempted a further clarification of the object of his 'deliverance day' celebrations. The functions on December 22nd, we are told, 'are not Muslim functions directed against their Hindu fellowmen as a community, but a condemnation pure and simple of the regime of the Congress caucus.' That sounds better than his first statement, and the declaration that he has no complaints against the Hindus as a community will be generally welcomed. But if he is sincere in this he should see the logical necessity for withdrawing or radically altering the resolution, which is to be the *piece de resistance* in the celebration programme so as to bring it into accord with these new sentiments. He should also see that in his latest statement there are observations which cannot easily be squared with these friendly feelings for his fellow Hindus. He says the Muslim League's chief objection to the Congress is that 'it totally prevents the Hindu and the Muslim communities from working together in a manner honourable to both.' And he calls upon all Indians, who agree with him as to what is the best form of government for India, to come forward now and make known their views. Mr Jinnah thinks that 'the conditions in India necessitate popular, rather than party governments which do justice to all sections of the people rather than to an irremovable majority.' It is a perfectly legitimate purpose to organize support for the view that coalition Ministries or non-party Ministries can alone be good for us. It may be legitimate too to organize countrywide propaganda and appeal to the electorate against the Congress on the ground that it refuses to accept this principle. But why should the Muslim League seek to bolster up this charge by bringing in a tale of outrages and tyranny for which not a little of evidence is offered and by willfully misrepresenting the aims and ideals of the Congress? If the Congress is averse to coalitions and prefers party government on the British model, is it fair to suggest, as Mr Jinnah does, that it is against a form of government which would do justice to all sections of the people and prefers a government which favours 'an irremovable majority'? If this means anything, it means that the Congress is a camouflaged Hindu communal organization out to benefit its own community at the expense of others. The irony of this allegation becomes the greater when Mr Jinnah, in his crusade against the Congress, which he dubs a Hindu body, calls upon non-Congress Hindus to help in

the glorious cause and plumes himself on 'the encouragement and support' he has received 'not only from all minorities but from non-Congress Hindus also,'—from bodies, we should say, whose common characteristic is their communal or sub-communal exclusiveness and who are united only in their opposition to a resolutely non-communal and national organization. One could understand Mr Jinnah attempting to form a united front against the Congress on the basis of a common socio-political policy and programme and ask for an opportunity to test its strength in a general election. But that would involve the voluntary relinquishment of the separatism which communal electorates keep us. The Muslim League, far from desiring or countenancing any such change, has declared that the Muslims are a separate nation and must be treated as such. It must therefore expect to find every other community in India, big and small, making the same claim. How then are we to arrive at any sort of government which will function at all, let alone functioning in such a manner as 'to do justice to all sections of the people,' which is Mr Jinnah's professed objective? The simple truth is that the 'irremovable majority' which Mr Jinnah finds intolerable can disappear only if the Muslims and other numerical minorities decide to get out of the prison of communal exclusiveness in which they have immured themselves and refuse to recognize these barriers so far as politics are concerned. It is not the Congress that stands in the way of their freedom, but an *idée fixe*.

72. North-West Frontier Province Governor's Report, 23 December 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2210, NAI.

[Extract]

...Jinnah's Day of Deliverance on December 22nd fell very flat in Peshawar. I have seen a great many Muslim visitors in the last ten days and almost without exception they have condemned Jinnah's tactics in ordering a celebration. Jinnah's move has embittered communal feeling locally. The ideas of some of the League leaders have become offensively communal, while the leader of the Hindu-Sikh Nationalist Party has countered the scheme by submitting a resolution for consideration at the Hindu Mahasabha Conference, proposing that a Committee should tour India to enquire into the difficulties and injustices from which Hindus have suffered as the result of the pro-Muslim policy of the Congress and non-Congress Ministries...

73. Muslims—A Separate Nation: Religion and God Above Country, Chaudhury Khaliquzzaman's Speech

Searchlight, 26 December 1939.

For Muslims religion and God are greater than patriotism, Muslims are a separate nation and the phrase 'united nation' was deceptive. There was nothing to choose between slavery under the British and slavery under the Congress. These were some of the important points made by Chaudhury Khaliquzzaman in his presidential speech at the Muslim Workers' Conference which commenced here this evening.

The gathering was very small, the visitors' galleries being mostly empty. The delegates to the Conference comprised of members of the primary, village, thanna, district and provincial League Committees.

The proceedings began with recitation from the Quran and other songs. The audience was delighted by the melodious songs of a young boy from Darbhanga, Kasim who was awarded two

medals. Messages from Mr Jinnah and others regretting their inability to attend and wishing success to the conference were read out by Mr S.A. Aziz.

Choudhary Khaliquzzaman then made his presidential speech. He said the year 1937 marked a turning point in the history of Muslims. Till then their leaders were looking to the British protection.

But in 1937 Congress came into power and they saw that they were left defenceless. It was then that they realized that they must depend on their own strength and the result was the phenomenal growth of the Muslim League.

Continuing he said that the Congress rule for two years had reduced Muslims to a position of slavery. Aliens could not remain here permanently and the majority was not a temporary affair. That is why the Muslims demanded adequate safeguards for themselves before they could join the Congress in the fight for freedom. After all, there was nothing to choose between slavery and slavery. Those Congress Muslims who were saying that Muslims would be with the Congress in its fight were deluding themselves.

Proceeding, he said that by independence he understood Hindu-Muslim unity, but Congress had decided not to have unity talks. This, he said, was in one sense good as that would make the League all the more strong.

He declared that they had not sold themselves to the British. They would be with the British so long as it paid them to be so. The League's aim, after all, was to strive for the protection of Muslims and their religion.

Proceeding Mr Khaliquzzaman said that Muslims and Hindus differed so widely in their religion and culture that they were two separate nations but living in the same country. The cry of one nation was a hoax.

Concluding he said, Muslims loved India but religion and God were dearer to them. If patriotism was opposed to their religion they would brush it aside, but not forsake their religion.

74. 'Muslim Allegation: A Pure Myth', Rafi Ahmad Kidwai¹

Hindu, 27 December 1939.

27 December 1939

Addressing a conference of Congress workers of Jhansi district, Mr Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, former Revenue Minister, said that the Muslim League's allegations that the Congress Ministries had perpetrated atrocities on Muslims were a pure myth; he asked Mr Fazlul Huq and other Leaguers to substantiate or withdraw them.

Despite their over-eagerness to put the UP Congress Ministry on the dock, Mr Kidwai said that the Muslim Leaguers had failed to point to a single instance to prove their allegations. Mr Fazlul Huq had referred to the Tanda firing in his charge-sheet, but perhaps he did not know that the inquiry conducted by Mr Justice Yorke had exonerated the authorities.² Other charges were also of the same nature. When Choudhury Khaliquzzaman, leader of the Muslim League Party in the UP Assembly, was asked to point out an instance of *zulum*, he mentioned the Bihar Congress Ministry's sanctioning of Rs 15,000 as grant for some Muslim educational institution and a certain UP District Magistrate's insistence on a mill management issuing a receipt in Hindi. Regarding the former case, Mr Khaliquzzaman alleged that the grant was given to alienate the sympathies of Muslims from the Muslim League! Such, said Mr Kidwai, were the allegations which Mr Jinnah wanted to be investigated by a Royal Commission.

Referring to the Hindu-Muslim question and the Congress attempt to solve it, Mr Kidwai said that Mr Jinnah did not want to discuss the communal problem with Congress leaders. He wanted to negotiate on political matters. Mr Jinnah was essentially a political man, having differences with the Congress on political matters, like the Liberals, but since he had no platform he had taken shelter behind a communal cry. Whenever the Congress asked Mr Jinnah to state the League demands specifically, he evaded it because he felt that the League represented different and diametrically opposed elements and if he placed concrete demands he might be unable to take the entire League with him, which might result in a serious split. Dreading this eventuality, Mr Jinnah kept up the communal cry and wanted to continue the present state of affairs so as to maintain his leadership. Consequently, whenever other League leaders wanted to talk with Congress leaders for a communal compromise, he always discouraged them. On one occasion he had protested against Nawab Ismail Khan negotiating with the Congress leaders; on another he had snubbed Sikander Hyat Khan for doing the same thing. But the British Government, taking advantage of the communal bickering, was exploiting the situation to consolidate its power.

Mr Kidwai was of the opinion that Gandhi should stop all negotiations with the Viceroy and Mr Jinnah, and should advise the Congress to draw up its programme independently because negotiations created confusion and a feeling of uncertainty in the country.

¹ Rafi Ahmad Kidwai (1894–1954); born at Masauli, in Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh; graduated from MAO College, Aligarh in 1920; gave up further studies to join Non-co-operation movement, 1921; after release from jail, served as Secretary to Pandit Motilal Nehru; elected MLA, at the Centre, 1926; Chief Whip of the Congress party in the Central Legislature, 1926–29; resigned in 1929 in response to Congress call for boycott of Legislature; joined Civil Disobedience Movement, 1930; was arrested and jailed for six months for organizing ‘non-tax’ campaign among the presents of Rae Bareilly; elected General Secretary UPPCC, 1931; was imprisoned, 1932–34; started an agitation against the moderate policy of the Congress Working Committee in 1934 and advocated non-acceptance of office under the 1935 Act; elected President, UPPCC, 1935; elected member, UP Legislative Assembly; Revenue Minister, UP, 1937–39; acted as Premier on several occasions; detained 1940–41, and 1942–45; Home and Revenue Minister, UP, 1946–47; member Congress Working Committee, 1947–51; Communication Minister, Government of India, 1947–51; Food and Agriculture Minister, Government of India, 1952.

² Nehru to Fazlul Huq, 26 December 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 470–72.

75. The Communal Problem in India¹

Syed Abdul Latif,² *The Pakistan Issue*, Lahore, 1943. This speech, reproduced in the book, was delivered on 27 December 1939 at Aundh.

The communal problem in India cannot be properly appreciated except, in its relation to its religious background; and that background our learned friend, Mr Chenchiah, has already analysed for us with remarkable clearness in the paper which he has read before us; and if you will grasp this background in the light of what I have myself supplied in my pamphlet, *The Muslim Problem in India*, copies of which have already been placed in your hands, you have all that I would have had to say by way of introduction to what I now propose to place before you for consideration.

You might have noticed that *The Muslim Problem in India* envisages the establishment in this country of a federation of culturally homogeneous states, ‘as a lasting solution to the communal problem. That is an ideal or rather a fatality towards which India will move, if the communal problem is not solved in proper time in a less arduous style. This idea of cultural zones, I may state, is conceived more in sorrow than in any wilful wish, and is to serve as a solution only when every attempt at reconciliation, in any other manner, fails. I am making this point clear to you at the very outset, because you must have noticed that the idea has caught the imagination of the Muslim intelligentsia all over the country and is now no longer considered even by its critics to be

a mere dream-fantasy. But I may assure you that, that is a misfortune for which a Muslim will work only to avoid a more serious misfortune, if and only if any better solution is not possible for us at the present moment.

I believe that a lasting reconciliation is possible if some sort of arrangement is agreed to at present on the lines indicated in Chapter VIII of *The Muslim Problem in India*, in which I have given an outline of an alternative constitution for India; and I pray you to consider that outline without any reference either to the zonal, ideal or the background against which it is set. It rests on the idea that if India is to express its nationhood, it can do so only in the form of a federation of communities and that the only type of government that might keep them all together can only be a government composite in character following an agreed policy.

I am not asking you to consider all the proposals that I have suggested in that Chapter. Many of them are matters of detail which will need to be thrashed out by those who might be called upon to frame a constitution for India. But the governing idea therein of a composite government is worthy of your earnest consideration. It is now nearly eight months since it was placed before the Muslim League under circumstances explained in the introduction to the pamphlet. But that very idea, as I see, has been working independently in the minds of such earnest patriots as Mr S. Srinivasa Iyengar³ and Dr C. Ramalinga Reddy⁴ and others. I wish you would give a further momentum to it and help the country.

And why do I make that request? The Congress High Command wishes to treat India as a homogeneous community and favours a parliamentary system of government for the country modelled on that of England. On the other hand, I believe that there is no solution to our difficulties, unless we resolve India into a federation of communities, each entering into a lasting partnership on terms of equality. Unless you approach the communal problem from this standpoint, which I fancy is realistic, you will always fail to arrive at a solution agreeable to the minorities. That is the first proposition which I wish you to think over while you are here at Aundh.

I know that this Conference is not in a position to deliver the goods, or speak with any authority except that of reason. We can at best offer a helpful suggestion to our politicians. But let that suggestion be endorsed by the hard facts of life such as we can notice with open eyes. This is a country where mere arithmetic or counting of heads will not take us very far. It is a country of communities, and you cannot talk of welding them into a nation unless you allow to each community the necessary sense of security and an urge for co-operation with every other. If the country, both at the Centre and in the constituent territorial units, can have for its government, a body of people who enjoy the confidence of the people as a whole, I mean all the communities, the minor issues of life such as the playing of music before places of worship, the use of animals for sacrificial purposes, the distribution of the loaves and fishes of office will automatically be settled in a spirit of accommodation. If we from this quiet and detached station can suggest what this system is to be like, I hope, we will be helping those who are in the thick of the fight over the issue, and cannot unfortunately take a dispassionate view of it.

The Congress has suggested that this should be done by a Constituent Assembly. It is for you to suggest whether that is a workable proposition. The suggestion has been made that a few representatives from every party or a body of experts should combine and design a Constitution for India. Gandhiji says that he cannot trust such a body, and asks 'who is to certify to their wisdom.' That is not a happy approach to a grave problem. May you suggest what you think is the sensible method of determining the procedure for drafting a constitution for our country. That is the second main proposition which I put forward for your earnest consideration.

At a time such as this, I wish we had a national organization truly representative of all the constituent communities. There would then have been no difficulty in framing an agreed constitution

for our country, a constitution such as would signify the independence that it so sorely needs. In the absence of one, it will be our misfortune to recognize the existing political parties in the country for what they stand for, and suggest some *modus operandi* between them, such as might allow the formation of a representative body who could be entrusted with the task of framing a constitution for India agreeable to all the parties concerned, including the Indian States.

I do not think I should suggest to you any further issue for consideration. Every other possible issue is in my opinion covered by the two which I have presented before you. To repeat, one is: what type of government will give the necessary sense of security to every constituent unit in a federation of communities in which form alone India can live as a nation? The other is: what machinery is to be set up to determine a constitution for our country at a time and in the circumstances, such as the present?

¹ *The Pakistan Issue*, was read out originally as a paper by Sayyid Abdul Latif at the All-India Council of the International Fellowship held from the 27th to 31st December 1939 at Aundh under the auspices of the Raja Saheb of Aundh. The conference was held under the presidentship of Professor P.A. Wadia of Bombay and was attended by representatives from every part of the country including a number of British and American social workers. The majority of the delegates were pro-Congress in their views. The resolution on the communal problem, as amended by the author and unanimously adopted, discountenanced the Congress idea of entrusting the task of framing a constitution for India to a Constituent Assembly, and recommended instead that it should be discharged by a small Representative body.

² Dr Syed Abdul Latif, an erudite, belonged to Hyderabad-Deccan, and was connected with the Hyderabad Academy and a number of public bodies. An author of *The Pakistan Issue*, Lahore 1943, Dr Latif is renowned for his Federation Scheme (on a cultural basis), which had been placed before the Muslim League Working Committee at Meerut on 25 March 1939, and which was brought out as a pamphlet, *Muslim Problem in India*, in 1939.

³ Srinivasa Iyengar (1871–1941); born at Ramajathapuram; educated in Madras; set up his legal practice in 1898 and rose to the leader of the Bar; Advocate General of Madras, 1916; Secretary, Reception Committee of the Congress, Madras, 1914; President, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and presided over the Congress session at Gauhati in 1926; member, Central Legislative Assembly and deputy leader of the opposition, 1926; organized the boycott of Simon Commission, 1928.

⁴ C. Ramalinga Reddy (1880–1951); born at Cuttamanchi, Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh; educated at Chittoor, Madras and Cambridge University, England; after return to India, joined Baroda College, Baroda as Vice-Principal, entered politics in 1921; elected to Madras Legislative Council as an outstanding educationist; worked for Justice Party for a short while; first Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University, 1926; resigned in 1930 as a protest against the repressive policy of the Government of India in arresting Congress leaders during the Salt Satyagraha movement; again Vice-Chancellor, Andhra University, 1936–49; and then Vice-Chancellor, Mysore University, 1949–51.

76. Nehru on Sikander Hyat Khan's Proposal

Interview to the Press, Lahore, 31 December 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 422–23.

31 December 1939

The proposal of Sir Sikander Hyat Khan seems to me to be entirely unworkable, partly because a small group is not likely to evolve a democratic constitution and partly because the British Government is supposed to have a hand in this business and the essential preliminary to the success of such a venture is that the British Government should decide to liquidate itself in India and the decision should lie with the Indian people themselves.

The constituent assembly will be representative of the masses whose interests are fundamentally economic. Though conflict might arise over economic issues, we are bound to succeed in communal and other fields. When the constituent assembly meets, it is bound to elect a small committee to frame proposals. Nothing can be considered as a bar to any action that might be taken by the Congress. It is not correct to say that if there is no agreement on the communal question, civil resistance will not be launched. It is, however, highly desirable that there should be a favourable

communal atmosphere for such a movement. No decision has as yet been taken to launch civil resistance, but in case there is any interference, we must resist it.

Quite apart from an agreement with the Muslim League, it is our business to cooperate on political issues with all parties. For instance, the Congress has no political differences with the Majlis-i Ahrar. The Ahrars have co-operated with the Congress in the past and I hope they will continue to do so in the future. The question of coming to an agreement with the Muslim nationalists on the communal question, therefore, does not arise.

The essential difficulty seems to be the political objective and method of the League. The conditions advanced by Mr Jinnah have made it extremely difficult to come to an agreement. His conditions are not only political but psychological. The Congress policy, however, has always been one of willingness to negotiate with everybody.

I refuse to answer any hypothetical question about the invasion of India by a foreign power, but I disapprove of the attack by Russia on Finland. That has retarded the cause for which Russia stands.

Question: Is the Congress going to make any declaration on Independence Day?

Jawaharlal Nehru: I do not think anything will be declared on that day. If anything is going to be declared, it will be done after the meeting of the Congress Working Committee.

The step taken by the Congress in giving up offices is a big step of non-cooperation. It is a positive and dynamic step. Our dissociation from the prosecution of the war is not a small matter.

77. 'The Muslim Attitude in India'

E.J. Benthall Papers, Box No. 10, Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge.

The Congress demand for a British declaration of independence has greatly intensified the opposition between the Hindu and Muslim communities and has introduced new factors into Indian politics which may have far-reaching effects upon the ultimate political destiny of the country. The apparent subsidence of Muslim influence which accompanied the introduction of Provincial Autonomy has been followed by a Muslim resurgence, expressing itself in an unwillingness to submit to majority rule on the ground that its working in India is undemocratic and implies Hindu domination.

By basing their plea for independence on the theoretic principles of majority rule the Congress leaders have impressed overseas democracies as to the reasonableness of their case. Congress propagandists in Great Britain and the United States assert that a settlement of the Indian controversy can easily be obtained by the simple application of the democratic principles which are understood and appreciated in these countries. This is far from being the case. Indian political conditions today are such that the immediate application of normal democratic methods for solving all problems will lead to chaos. The Muslims are not prepared to subject themselves to the majority community which encircles them, and assertions are openly made that civil war will follow any settlement that places the Muslims into the hands of the Hindu majority which composes the Congress Party.

British faith in democracy as applying to India found its expression in the scheme of Federation, which aimed at associating British India and the Indian States in a federal project, based on compromises and calculated to bring the federal units into constitutional harmony with the democratic ideals of the British Commonwealth. The scheme did not represent democracy in its fullest sense, but it marked a stepping-stone towards it. The preliminary stage of the 1935 reforms saw the establishment of Provincial Autonomy, which transferred provincial control from British

to Indian hands, and represented the expansion of the democratic system in a more elaborate form than had been previously attempted in India. The Muslims claim that this measure of democracy has failed, holding that Provincial Autonomy in its working in the Congress-governed provinces has emerged as a dictatorship, exercised by an inner cabinet of the Congress Working Committee, which Muslims describe as a caucus with powers to order Congress Ministries to assume and abandon office for political considerations which have no bearing on Provincial affairs.

In the first elections under the new Constitution the Congress Party secured control of eight of the 11 provinces. This unexpected accession to power warped the judgment of Congress leaders. Believing that its success at the polls justified its claim to represent all India, the Congress Party proceeded to launch a 'mass contact' campaign, in the hope of enticing the Muslim masses into the Congress fold. The campaign was a political blunder, and had the effect of unifying the Muslims against the Congress in a manner hitherto unknown in Indian political experience. The Muslim League came into its own. Prior to the elections, the League had but a loosely-knit organization, was divided within itself, and was marred with jealousies among its leaders; after the elections it was not called upon to form Ministries, even in the Muslim Provinces. The Congress campaign among the Muslim masses changed all that. The belief emerged that the Congress Party was endeavouring to cause divisions among the Muslims, with the object of impressing the world that the Congress Party was the sole representative organization of politically-minded India. The Congress policy gave new life to the Muslim League whose members rallied with such enthusiasm behind their leader, Mr M.A. Jinnah, that he was virtually given a blank cheque on behalf of the League.

The League quickly became the focussing agency, on an all-India scale, for Muslim political opinion. Although non-League Ministries held office in the important Provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, the Prime Ministers of these territories entered into new associations with Mr Jinnah. The League achieved a new unity and a new importance in current politics, and no other Muslim Party has such an all-India influence. The Jamiyat al-Ulama-i Hind (Society of Learned Men of India) has primarily a religious basis, and its present incursions into politics are led by men lately connected with the League. The Ahrars attained importance in the Punjab some years ago, when its members flocked in bands into Kashmir to take part in political activities there, but their attitude in the Shahidganj affair in Lahore lessened their prestige among orthodox Muslims. There is a general inclination to associate the Jamiyat al-Ulama and the Ahrars with the Congress political philosophy.

It is held by some that the younger educated Muslims today disagree with League policy, chiefly because League leadership has largely been based on communal considerations. But Muslim support for the League has lately been developed for political reasons, particularly since the Congress leaders demanded a declaration of independence. The majority of politically conscious Muslims support the League, not necessarily by membership, and no existing Muslim Party is strong enough to supplant it. Nor can any Muslim group produce a leader to supercede Mr Jinnah. While the communal issue remains intricately interwoven with the constitutional controversy, it has lately assumed a new character, in which the Muslims show concern for their future constitutional status in the country, quite apart from the religious features of communalism.

The League has made it clear that no assurance about constitutional advance should be given to the Congress leaders without the consent and approval of the League; and it holds that no constitution should be framed and adopted without that consent and approval. The League does not recognize the authority either of the British Government or the Congress Party to determine the future constitutional position of the Muslim community, and it rejects any proposal for a constitutional solution along lines implying the supremacy of the Hindu majority.' The League

wants the British Government to review and revise the 1935 Constitution *de novo*, in the light of the experience gained in the working of Provincial Autonomy and the political tendencies which have emerged since its introduction. Muslims claim that under Congress governments their community has suffered, asserting that Congress policy aims at 'the intimidation and demoralization of the Muslims, the extermination of the healthy and nation-building influences of Muslim culture, the suppression of Muslim religious customs and their religious obligations, and the elimination of their political rights as a separate community.' These views are naturally contested by the Congress Party.

League policy in the constitutional controversy has been described as negative and obstructive, but it is clear that Mr Jinnah is directing the League along specific lines, based on the assumption that the Muslims represent a nation, co-existing in India with a Hindu nation. Muslims refuse to regard themselves as a minority. The basic principle of Islam upholds the equality of all men, and Mr Jinnah sees this principle as being in direct conflict with Hinduism, which has segregated the Hindu community into scores of castes. It is true that the caste system has undergone modifications in recent years, but its basic principles remain, to the extent that the Scheduled Castes are inclined to ally themselves with the Muslims rather than with their Hindu co-religionists. The Muslims maintain that the Hindu caste system is the negation of democracy, and they claim that the working of democracy in India means the establishment of an Oligarchy, deriving its power from the Hindu majority.

The League opposes both Federation and the new offer of Dominion Status for the same reason as it opposes independence of the kind sought by the Congress Party—because it implies the dominance of the Hindus. While Muslims are in favour of self-government they do not want it along lines which mean the transference of power from British to Hindu hands. The League has not yet defined its solution for its constitutional controversy, but Mr Jinnah says it will present concrete proposals when the Constitution is brought under review for revision. He has received an assurance from the Viceroy that the post-war examination of the Constitution does not exclude from examination any part of the 1935 Act or the plans on which it is based. But it is obvious that Mr Jinnah does not intend subscribing to a Constitution that is founded on the ordinarily accepted standards of democracy, asserting that the importance and size of the Muslim community justifies something other than the subservience of the Muslims to a majority representing an entirely different faith and culture.

The emphasis given by the Congress Party to the decisive powers of the majority is largely responsible for the present constitutional deadlock. The proposal that a constituent assembly should be convened to settle both constitutional and the communal problems has deepened Muslims' suspicions that the Congress seeks to establish a Hindu Raj. Muslim hostility to the idea of majority rule has further been engendered by declarations made by leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha (orthodox Hindu body), who have clearly indicated that the majority has the right to shape the future constitutional destiny of the country. Muslim opposition to majority rule, however, cannot be dismissed as meaning hostility to democracy as such. As the *Civil and Military Gazette* recently remarked: 'Mr Jinnah's arguments against the democratic form of government in India are obviously based on a conviction that Hindus, as a result of centuries of observance of caste, cannot act democratically in politics.' This expresses the Muslim case.

Several prominent Muslims, including Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Premier of the Punjab, have devised their own schemes for the future Constitution. Most of them have taken the form of segregating the Muslim areas of India into separate constitutional entities, and securing the protection of Muslim 'nationals' in regions which do not directly come under Muslim rule. It is even suggested by some that Muslims, discontented under the Congress provincial governments,

should have the right to turn to a 'national home' of their own within India, a proposal which raises the prospect of mass migrations of peoples from one part of the country to another. But hopes are still entertained that some effort may yet be made by Indians to prevent the division of India into Hindu and Muslim units, although it is clear that the Congress Party will have to approach the communal and constitutional questions with greater realism than it has so far shown if a unified India is to be maintained.

78. Sayyed Ali Muhammed H. Rashdi, Secretary, Sind Provincial Moslem League, on Sind Ministry and Congress

Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 4, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 223–24.

The summary of Mr Nihchaldass's interview appearing in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, of July 1926, is an important document, revealing the latest trend of Sind politics. It indicates that all is not well again with the Sind Ministry and that once again attempts are to be made to secure Congress cooperation on the grounds that the present Sind Ministry is full of nationalist elements, that its achievements fully entitle it to the Congress support, and that in case the Congress did not take advantage of K.B. Allahbaksh's 'still-existing nationalistic attitude' the communal forces now dormant will revive and in due course of time overwhelm the whole of India. Let us examine these arguments in the light of the conditions really obtaining in Sind.

Why has the Ministry Become Congress-minded?

Why is it, I ask, that the Ministry has come to feel that it must now place itself under the Congress protection? What new developments have taken place there that have made it so impatient for assuming, this time, the Congress cooperation? The Moslem League in Sind, according to Mr Nihchaldass, has been leading a precarious existence and he has also refused to admit that the Ministry is now weaker than before. What are then the circumstances which have prompted them to court Congress cooperation at this stage?

Disillusionment and Disappointment

Those who know Sind conditions intimately are aware of the real reasons responsible for the Ministry's latest drift towards the Congress. They will agree with me when I say that it is not an outcome of any honest inner urge of nationalism, but it is a sequel to the disillusionment of the opportunists and deserters from the other Parties whose cooperation the Ministry had temporarily secured by holding out extravagant and irredeemable promises to them, in order to escape its difficulties of January last, and who have by now done to the Ministers' stomachs what only a rough sea voyage could have done to them. I am supported in this view by Mr Nihchaldass's own Secretary, Mr Gordon, ISE, who while on leave in England is reported in the Press to have recently said, on the eve of the annual Sind dinner, that the Sind Ministry existed chiefly on catering to the personal needs of individuals. I wish Mr Nihchaldass had not omitted this basic point while speaking on Sind affairs, which really explains the reason for this sudden outburst of love and liking for the Congress.

Will Congress be Justified?

Another question which ought to be carefully considered in this connection is whether the Sind Ministry, during the 18 months of its existence, has done anything which should justify the Congress

to take it up under its own protection if the Congress really does not like to do, by hook or crook, a little more of monkeying with the Muslem Provinces by throwing to the winds even its own principles and programme.

Their Antecedents

Let us first look into the antecedents of the Hon'ble the head of the present Ministry himself. He was elected to the Assembly as a member of the United Party. When the United Party could not get any office, he joined the then Ministerial Party and when depending on his support Sir Ghulam Hussain ignored his Hindu followers and brought a crisis on himself he jilted, Sir Ghulam one hour before the latter's fate was to be decided, and became Premier himself. Within four months' time he gave a go-by to old friends of the United Party also and laid the foundation of a government having no ostensible programme, principles or party. Shortly afterwards, when there was a storm over the assessment question he began flirting with the Congress and when his overtures evoked no satisfactory response from the Congress, excepting adoption by the latter of an attitude of passive neutrality, he came to Mr Jinnah and expressed his desire in writing to join the Muslim League if only his Premiership was guaranteed. However, when no such guarantee came forth from the League quarters he began distributing the crumbs of office among those who were prepared to betray their Parties, and after a ceaseless effort of 8 months, during which time no Assembly session was called, he succeeded in gathering around him the requisite number of members, each one of whom had his own tale of greed and betrayal to tell. And, as was expected, now that the Premier has exhausted all his resources to keep those wild cats tied by their tails any longer he is once again active to replace them with some new victims of his nationalistic fervour and extravagant promises. It will further be of interest to note that during the last six months twice attempts have been made by the Premier to coalesce with the League on certain conditions but he has always met with a refusal from there.

With regard to Sir Ghulam Hussain, who is now 'second in command', it should, I think, suffice to say that within the last 30 months, he has made and unmade, joined and resigned from, no less than half-a-dozen political parties, to name a few, the United Party, the Muslim Political Party, the Democratic Party, the Democratic Coalition Party, the Moslem League Party, and the Allahbaksh Party.

Mr Patel's Recent Statement

Will any honourable, honest, or responsible party having any claim to constitutional morality ever allow itself to be lured in by a Ministry composed of such elements? Mr Patel, the head of the Congress Parliamentary Committee, has issued a statement which, through a curious coincidence, has appeared in the same issue of the *Civil and Military Gazette* in which Mr Nihchaldass's interview has been published. In that statement Mr Patel has said: '*The prestige of the Congress inside and outside the country lies in her moral strength. Many self-seeking persons are trying to enter the Congress as she is capturing power. It is time to cleanse the Congress, if the country is not to be polluted*'. Where do K.B. Allahbaksh, OBE, and Sir Ghulam Hussain, KCSI, stand in the face of this pronouncement?

Ministry's Achievements

Before I conclude, I think I must also say a few things about the achievements of the present Ministry. Dealing with the same point, even Mr Nihchaldass himself has not been able to say anything beyond this that '*there has been an all round improvement and a change in the mentality of the officials in their dealings with the public. The custom of forced labour had been stopped and illegal gratification*

with customary sanction was being eradicated.' These are the achievements of his Ministry which entitle it to Congress support! I, however, dispute his statements even on these points. There is no change in the official mentality and it is only during their regime that a certain official had with impunity slapped a Congress office-bearer on his face and had refused permanently to grant interview to a Congress Member of the Sind Assembly. And, when applications were invited by the Ministry directly from people about half-a-lac applications were received within 4 weeks, all complaining of official arrogance. Corruption and forced labour continue unabated, and on the question of corruption I would refer the readers to the 'Assembly debates' for those days when the non-confidence motion had come in for discussion, which contain most damaging and highly scandalous revelations. May I also ask Mr Nihchaldass by what methods the Ministry has secured the alliance of the 'fluid Element' will it be prepared to face an impartial enquiry committee?

About the general improvements brought about by the present Ministry, I can only say that there has been no retrenchment (although the figure of per capita expenditure on administration in Sind is higher than that of any other Province in India excepting Bombay); there have been made more new lucrative appointments; instead of giving relief to agriculturists they have increased assessment rates in defiance of the Congress Party mandates and the well-known resolution of the Karachi session of the Congress; there has been no relief of Agricultural indebtedness; there has been no marked improvement in the existing defective system of irrigation; the stunt of the literacy campaign has proved a failure beyond enabling the Ministers and officials to draw more from the public exchequer in the shape of travelling allowances than what has been contributed from the Provincial finances towards the literacy campaign fund; the antiquated repressive regulations have been allowed to remain on the statute [book] in defiance of public opinion; the hardships of the tenants have increased; and the policy of prohibition has been openly ridiculed in the Assembly.

These, in a nutshell, being the achievements and the past record of the Ministry, it is for the Congress to decide whether it is prepared to throw its lot in with such turn-coat politicians by paying a heavy price which has been stipulated by the Ministers themselves, namely, that in case the present Ministry joined the Congress the latter's old war veterans shall be relegated to the position of pure tuft-hunters in order to make room for the new acquisitions, like Sir Ghulam Hussain and K.B. Allahbaksh. Only a body of unscrupulous and rabid communalists can eat that humble pie.

79. Copy of a Letter Alleging Discrimination Against Muslim Press in Congress-ruled Provinces

Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 4, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 225-27.

Dear Sir,

You are the Leader of the present-day Congress. Congress, you claim to be an honest association. You also say day in and day out that Congress stands for free Press and free speech. By experience we feel this freedom is not to be enjoyed by Mussalmans. On the contrary free expression of view is rigidly denied to Mussalmans. Here is the latest feat of the Congress Cabinet of CP in gagging the entire Muslim Press. Seven security orders in one week is recorded which Dyer and O'Dwyer could never have dreamt. I do not wish to take much of your valuable time, because I know this valuable time could have no claim from Mussalmans but enclose (a) three numbers of *C.P. Times*, (b) order of the Local Government demanding security from *C.P. Times*, (c) copy of the *Hitavada* editorial note, (d) copy of the order against *Muslim* and *National Press*, and along with this I would like to state as follows:

- (i) The Press Note of CP Government dated 22/6/39 stated that if in future any newspaper writes objectionable communal matters then action will be taken, but action in almost all the seven cases were taken on articles written in April and May. An editorial note of *Hitavada* enclosed herein will show you how non-Muslims think of the action of the Ministry.
- (ii) The Press Note quoted above clearly laid down that action will only be taken in clause (h), sub-section 1, of section 4 of the Indian Press Emergency Powers Act, 1931. This (h) clause is a communal Clause but in the case of *CP Times* clause (d) is added with (h) and in the matter of *Muslim*, an Urdu weekly of Nagpur, and *National Press*, Nagpur, security of Rs 1,000 has been demanded exclusively under sedition clauses (b) and (d). These clauses in sub-section 1 of section 4 are non-communal clauses of the Act. Copy of the order against these are enclosed for ready reference.

Pre-Congress governments were issuing one or two warnings before taking any drastic action of demanding security from the newspapers or presses. Here, the case is otherwise. I had an occasion to meet the Divisional Commissioner on 26/6/39, an experienced and very cool-headed ICS, who is as well not a Britisher; the meeting was for other reasons and in course of talk we discussed newspapers and the Press Note and if I remember right he expressed his views on *C.P. Times* which he called a strong anti-Ministry paper but decidedly non-communal. He never hinted that security orders are on the way. He was coming straight from Panchmarhi via Khandwa and I presumed that he must be in the knowledge of the Government. Question of warning never arose as late as 26/6/39. I had seen the Deputy Commissioner several times in connection with public matters. I also remember that once he discussed this particular article now complained of as objectionable and said that this [was] a clever piece of writing which cannot come within the purview of the law. He told me that I had suppressed certain details which I ought to have put to show the other side of the picture. Thus whenever I had occasion to see the local officials who are today accredited to see agents of the Congress Cabinet, I was no doubt told the fury of the Ministers for exposing their sins and guilts but nobody ever told me that the Government would like to warn me for any writing said to be communal. Here ends the painful story. I do not expect anything tangible from your quarter. I also do not pray for rescinding the orders but I take this opportunity to place before you the sufferings of Mussalmans and the dishonest declarations and contrary actions of the Cabinet. Probably before venturing to praise your Ministers in public in future you may have this point in mind that there is some such place like CP where the Ministry is dishonest, one of the Ministers is alleged to be guilty of abduction, and the Ministry as a whole is doing all it can to kill rights of the minority. Because you are responsible for keeping the Ministry in its place, I am sending these papers for your perusal. Please excuse the trouble thus I am giving you.

Yours faithfully,

Enclosed:

- (a) 3 newspapers—*C.P. Times*.*
- (b) Order of Government re sec. *C.P. Times*.*
- (c) Copy of the *Hitavada* editorial note.
- (d) Copy of the order against *Muslim* and *National Press*.*
- (e) Copy of section 4, sub-sec. 1, clauses (b) (d) (h) of the Indian Press Emergency Powers Act, 1931.
- (f) Editorial of *Bombay Chronicle* re warning.

*Not included

Copy forwarded to:

- (1) Mr M.K. Gandhi, Segaoon, Wardha.
- (2) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, 19A, Ballygunje Circular Road, Calcutta.
- (3) Mr S.C. Bose, Ex-President, All India Congress, Woodburn Street, Calcutta.
- (4) Mr Rajendra Prasad, President, All India Congress, Patna.
- (5) Acharya Kripalani, Secretary, AICC, Anand Bhavan, Allahabad.
- (6) Mr V.J. Patel, President, Parliamentary Sub-Committee, All India Congress, Bombay.
- (7) Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Anand Bhavan, Allahabad.

[Enclosure: 1]

[Excerpts from the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1931 (section 4, sub-section 1, clauses (b) (d) (h), explanations 3-4)]

- (b) Directly or indirectly express approval or administration of any such offence, or of any persons, real or fictitious, who has committed or is alleged or represented to have committed any such offence;
- (d) To bring into hatred or contempt His Majesty or the Government established by law in British India or the administration of justice in British India or any class or section of His Majesty or the said Government; or
- (h) To promote feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects.

Amendment in Explanations

Explanation 3: Comments expressing disapprobation of the administrative or other action of the Government (or administration) without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection shall not be deemed to be of the nature described in clause (d) or clause (f) of this sub-section.

Explanation 4: Words pointing out, without malicious intentions and with an honest view to their removal, matters which are producing or have a tendency to produce feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects shall not be deemed to be words of the nature described in clause (h) of this sub-section.

[Enclosure: 2]

(The *Hitavada* of Nagpur dated 19 July 1939 on security deposits demanded from two Muslim newspapers)

The CP Government have demanded securities from two Muslim newspapers in the Province and this has had a disturbing effect on Mussalmans. Mussalmans complain as they did at a meeting held in Nagpur the other day that the Ministry in a Press Note dated June 22 stated that action would be taken only in future against articles likely to create communal discord and that securities have been demanded from the newspapers for articles published long before the Press Note of 22 June. If this is really the fact, Muslims have a genuine grievance that Government have not implemented the 'Assurance' in the Press Note though this does not justify the motives that they attributed to the Ministry at the meeting. We would advise Government to proceed with circumspection in regard to action against the Press as the action of the kind which they have taken against the Muslim Press has created bitterness which could have been avoided if the Ministry had allowed time to elapse to help newspapers to respond in a proper spirit to the warning contained in the Press Note of 22 June.

80. All India Muslim Educational Conference: Fifty-second Session,
Calcutta, 29 to 31 December 1939

Indian Annual Register, Vol. II, 1939, pp. 425–28.

The Welcome Address

The fifty-second annual All-India Muslim Educational Conference began its three-day session at Mohamed Ali Park, Calcutta on the 29th December 1939 under the presidentship of Nawab Kamal Yar Jung Bahadur of Hyderabad. The meeting opened with a recitation from the Holy Quoran and the singing of the Moslem National Anthem of Sir Mahomed Iqbal.

Welcoming the delegates, the hon. Mr A.K. Fazlul Huq, Chief Minister of Bengal, Chairman of the Reception Committee, surveyed the educational progress and achievements of the community since 1886, when the Conference was founded by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. The part played by the Aligarh Movement in national regeneration was, he said, eminently great and glorious. It was perhaps the most successful organized national achievement of renascent Muslim India. Had there been no Aligarh, Mr Fazlul Huq added, there would have been no Muslim League and no Modern Muslim India as an independent cultural unit in the body politic of this country. Mr Huq observed that the need for the All-India Muslim Educational Conference in Modern India was never greater than to-day to safeguard the cultural unity and educational progress of the community as a whole. He strongly pleaded for the ideal of cultural autonomy and educational freedom of Indian Muslims.

Criticizing the Wardha Scheme, Mr Huq said, 'Mr Gandhi is the real author of the Wardha Scheme of Basic Education. Every Muslim as a Muslim is a supporter of the ideal of universal primary education, but the Wardha Scheme is not the last word on the subject. I fully and frankly criticized the scheme in my presidential address delivered last year at the Patna session of the conference. I still stick to my view. Wardha is being converted into the centre of a new religion or philosophy of life, and the Wardha Scheme into its cultural vehicle, just as the Congress has been turned into its political machine. By refusing to provide for the religious education of Muslim boys and girls as an integral part of the school course and at the same time basing the entire education and its ideal on the Gandhian teachings of Ahimsa dharma and satyagraha dharma, and the inculcation of the idea that no religion is better than another, the supporters of the Wardha Scheme seek to de-Islamize Muslim boys and girls in the most important and formative period of their intellectual lives. I want to declare from this platform that as long as Muslims are true to Islam, they will resist this plan of denationalizing Muslims. The Muslims will not tolerate any scheme or plan, of which religious teaching and Islamic traditions are not the basis, and the language and medium of which has not been fully and freely approved by the committee and in the actual administration and working of which the Muslims have not secured effective representation. The Muslims will never barter away their cultural autonomy, educational freedom and religious independence for any system of free education which is calculated to undermine the foundations of their nationality.'

Mr Muhammad Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani,¹ honorary secretary of the All India Muslim Educational Conference, Aligarh, proposed Nawab Kamal Yar Jung Bahadur² to the chair.

Seconding the motion, the hon. Mr H.S. Suhrawardy,³ Minister, Bengal Government, said: 'If there is one thing which the Muslim community craves it is education and still more education. From our very childhood, we have imbibed the doctrine that it is the duty of Muslims not only to be educated themselves, but to educate others. Under these circumstances, it is a tragedy so far as the Muslims are concerned that they have not got those facilities for education for which they crave. The All-India Muslim Educational Conference merely translates that burning desire for

education into action, and provides the medium for those who are desirous of taking part in the movement for better and universal education. We know to what extent the Muslims of Bengal are anxious to get educated and to educate their children, and to forego many rights and claims if this can be secured for them. But this education must be one that proceeds on right lines, viz., an education which will be based on their religion, the moral dictates inculcated by Islam, and on their culture and their history and which will inspire them with the ideals for which Muslim religion stands. In Nawab Kamal Yar Jung Bahadur we have a great patron of learning and of education, and it is fit and proper that he should be chosen to guide this conference in its deliberations when the educative necessities of the Muslims of India are becoming more and more insistent.'

The Presidential Address

Nawab Kamal Yar Jung Bahadur, in his presidential address suggested that a small committee should be entrusted with the task of framing a scheme of Muslim education and offered to bear the committee's expenses himself. Making a general survey of education in India, the President said that the last two-and-a-half years had shown that in the provincial legislatures a majority party could easily be formed from a single religious community, and that, if it so pleased it could swamp the entire province with its own culture, born of its religion. 'I know full well,' he continued, that the Muslims, as a community, are not satisfied with the schemes of education which have, of late, pressed themselves on their attention from diverse quarters. Of one thing however, I am certain, that in the days which face us, no system of education will command our approval which neglects to develop in us all those qualities, intellectual, spiritual and moral, which distinguish us as custodians of the spirit and culture of Islam, which has a mission of its own to fulfil for the uplift of mankind.

'There are two primary objectives which every system of education for the Moslems should attempt to achieve—firstly, the preservation of the distinguishing features of Moslem culture; and secondly, the consolidation of the Muslim social order.' The President suggested that a small committee, of perhaps three members, should tour the country, consulting local educational and economic experts at each centre, and frame a scheme of education based on the knowledge gained from these consultations. 'It should be the concern of this committee,' he said, 'to determine to what extent and in what particular subjects of study a common syllabus for all, Muslims and non-Muslims, is permissible, and in what subjects an autonomous provision for the Muslims would be needed. It should also be the task of the committee to suggest what statutory machinery would be needed to guarantee the satisfactory working of such provision'.

In conclusion, the President appealed for the re-adoption of 'the great institution of Zakat,' which was at present miserably neglected. If they could but act up to this fundamental tenet of Islam, the problem of financing schemes for the educational and economic uplift of the Muslim masses would be easily solved.

Islamic Ideal and Nationalism

The contribution of Islam to the growth and development of nationalism in the world was dealt with at length by the hon. Mr Azizul Haque,⁴ Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University and speaker of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, presiding over the Islamic Culture section of the Conference in the afternoon.

Islam, he said, did not accept nationalism as the final evolution in the history of man. An international outlook had ever been the ultimate ideal in Islam. Yet, nationalism had always been accepted as the immediate objective. He declared that every Muslim was a patriot to his last breath. They [Muslims] claimed India as the land of their birth, even though there were people

who would not hesitate to treat them as guests and foreigners. They were Indians and children of the soil, as much as anyone else.

The recognition and vindication of the principle of equality had been the very fundamental characteristic of Islamic ideal and outlook, observed Mr Haque. From its very inception, Islam had been a great democratizing process, and Islam and its Prophet preached the principles of equality and democracy as the basis of human relationship.

To-day democracy might have been temporarily eclipsed in some countries of the world, but the day was not far off when democracy would once again break through the clouds. When that day came, it was the spirit of Islam which would come to the rescue of an aggrieved world.

Mr Azizul Haque added that in that scheme of human affairs, there was no place for the steam-roller type of democracy which did not take into consideration the cultural, political and social rights of the minorities. Islam stood for justice, equality and fairplay for all, and as such any form of government, democratic or otherwise, which did not adequately and effectively guarantee these fundamental rights to the minorities, had no place in Islamic thought.

Resolutions

The Conference passed a resolution requesting the authorities of the various universities in India to establish a department of Islamic History and Culture, and appreciating the efforts by the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University to establish such a department in the University of Calcutta.

Prof. Haroon Khan Sherwani, of Osmania University, in moving the resolution, said that it was strange that, although the Indian universities had to cater for the needs of both Muslims and non-Muslims inhabiting their provinces, some of them had not taken any heed of the necessity for teaching the history of Islam and Islamic Culture.

By a resolution moved by Dr Abdul Aziz Puri, of Aligarh University, the Conference congratulated the Government of Bengal on having included Islamic History and Islamic philosophy among the subjects for competitive examinations and requested the Government of India and other Provincial Governments to include these subjects in their respective competitive examinations.

Resolutions—Second Day, Calcutta, 30 December 1939

The second day's session of the Conference commenced this morning with Sir Muhammad Saadullah,⁵ Premier of Assam, in the chair. In his presidential address, Sir Muhammad Saadullah urged the spread of education and advised the audience not to forget the influence of environment. In other words, in a place where agriculturists predominated, agriculture should form part of their curriculum. The last factor in the spread of education, from the speaker's personal experience in Assam, was that there should be a large number of Muslim teachers in schools so that the would-be student might be encouraged and induced to take higher education.

University for Frontier

The Conference passed a number of resolutions, by one of which it requested the Governments of India and the North-West Frontier Province to establish a university in the Frontier Province in view of the special needs of the people of that province.

The Conference also resolved that in view of the educational backwardness of the Muslims of Bengal, the Government of Bengal be requested to provide adequate facilities and finances for the purpose of encouraging talented young Muslims in the prosecution of their higher and technical education in India and abroad.

The Conference regretted that no provision had been made in the province of Bengal for free and primary education upto this time and it requested the Government of Bengal to make arrangements for the same at an early date.

Lastly the Conference recommended to the Government that in rural areas agriculture should form part of the school curriculum and in urban areas handicraft should be included in the general curriculum.

Addressing the Conference on 'Our Educational Ideal', Mr Mazhar Ali⁶ said that the scheme of education should be a comprehensive one covering every phase of Muslim activity from the cradle to the grave. By this he meant that the educational part of their life, their professional life and their public life should all be controlled by a scheme which should make life complete.

Wardha Scheme Criticized

The Wardha scheme of education came in for much criticism when the Conference assembled for the night session under the Chairmanship of Nawab Kamal Yar Jung Bahadur, Nawab Sardar Yar Jung Bahadur, General Secretary of the Conference, moved a resolution disapproving of the Wardha scheme and suggesting the appointment of a small committee with Nawab Kamal Yar Jung Bahadur as Chairman to formulate a comprehensive scheme of education which would suit the requirements of Muslims in the various provinces. The committee will tour the provinces, consult local educationists and economists and submit its report to the Central Standing Committee for the next annual session of the Conference. Local committees will be appointed in the various provinces to collect materials and data for the information of the committee.

The resolution was supported by Mr A.K. Fazlul Huq, Premier of Bengal.

Education of Muslim Women

A strong plea for the propagation of education among Muslim girls and women was made by Dr M. Bazlur Rahman, Principal of the Ismail College, Bombay, presiding over the Female Education Section of the Conference in the afternoon. Dr Rahman said that under the changing political conditions of India to-day, they had not only to concentrate on producing good mothers, but also good citizens. He added that the schools that had recently been started were mainly instructional institutions; institutions which would prepare women for earning an independent living were also needed.

The Conference was strongly of the opinion that the social and economic needs of the country in general and Muslims in particular demanded that a definite bias be created in favour of the study of domestic science in all stages of girls' education. The Conference, therefore, made the following recommendations to Educational Boards and Universities and Provincial Governments: (a) provision should be made in all girls' schools for teaching domestic science as a compulsory subject for all students; (b) Matriculation course should be so revised that domestic science might be made compulsory for girls in lieu of a subject less useful to them; (c) students who might wish to prosecute the study of domestic science for the Intermediate or B.A. examinations should be allowed to offer it and provision be made for its study in all colleges.

The Conference recommended to the Government of Bengal that adequate recurring and non-recurring grants be given to all girls' schools to encourage individual enterprise regarding the establishment of schools.

The Conference considered it necessary to start an endowment fund for the purpose of awarding stipends to encourage education among girls. It urged that the Muslims of Bengal should take the necessary action in this matter.

Resolutions Third Day—Calcutta, 31 December 1939, Plea for Industrial Training

The Conference held a short session in the afternoon under the chairmanship of Mr Abdul Hasan of Aligarh. The deliberations related to questions relating to the economic and social reforms for the Muslim community.

The President, in his speech, regretted that Muslims were not taking any interest in commerce and industry but were hankering after Government services. 'If we could reform our character and train ourselves we would be able to produce much better citizens in future. The basis on which our social life depends is our relationship with our fellow-beings.' He advised the people to acquire the habit of honest dealing.

The Conference resolved that apart from education through the medium of books it was necessary that young men should be trained in industry and handicraft and that efforts should be made to raise funds to that end.

Meeting again at night, the Conference passed the annual report of the Secretary and concluded at midnight.

¹ Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani; Sunni Muslim leader from Aligarh; landowner and scholar in Islamic theology; was elected an Aligarh trustee in 1897, and was a member of the University Court and was in charge of Sunni theology at the College; was a member of the Nadwat-ul-Ulanu Lucknow, he twice presided over its annual sessions; was a Fellow of Allahabad University, and in 1917 was appointed Joint Secretary of the All India Muslim Educational Conference; eventually became head of ecclesiastical department of the Hyderabad State and was awarded the title of Nawab Sadar Yar Jung.

² Yar Jung Bahadur, Nawab, (d. 1944); Nawab Bahadur Yar Jung belonged to a very famous family of Hyderabad. He was succeeded by the founder, Mahamud Nawaz Khan, as leader of Majlis-i-Itihad-ul Muslimeen of Hyderabad State and possessed great organizing capacity with blessings of the Nizam. He made the Ittehad a powerful communal organization. He also embarked upon a campaign to convert Hindus to Islam in certain districts of the State. He had considerable oratorical gifts and spoke movingly in chaste Urdu. He was elected President of All India States Muslim League in Lahore on 23 May 1940, 1941 and 1942. He attended the sessions of the All India Muslim League and was often called upon to address the gathering after the formal conclusion and was among the best speakers in Urdu the League had. He died on 25th June, 1944.

³ Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy (1893–1963); born in Midnapore, 1893; educated at Calcutta Madrasa; St Xavier's College Calcutta (B.Sc.); Oxford University, B.A. Hons. in Jurisprudence; M.A., B.C.L.; Gray's Inn (Bar-at-Law); started career as advocate in Calcutta and became known in later days as one of Pakistan's leading lawyers; Member, Bengal Legislative Council, 1921 (Burdwan Division—M); belonged to the group of nationalists in Council; though not a Congressmen, supported the Khilafat movement and defended the 1921 Non-cooperation movement in the Council; also supported the Swaraj Party; Deputy Mayor, Calcutta Corporation for 3 years (when C.R. Das was Mayor); attended the 20th session, AIML Calcutta December 1938; Secretary, Bengal Provincial Muslim League; Muslim League member, Bengal Legislative Assembly, 1937; Minister (held various portfolios of Labour, Finance, Public Health, Local Self-Govt, Food) during April 1943–45 in the Khwaja Nazimuddin ministry; Muslim League member Bengal Legislative Assembly, 1946; formed Muslim League Ministry in Bengal, 1946–47, and was Chief Minister and Home Minister; negotiated with the provincial Hindu leaders for a United Bengal of Hindus and Muslims; attended the League Legislators' Convention, Delhi, 1946, and moved the Delhi Resolution there; at the AIML Council meeting Karachi, 1947; opposed the resolution calling for the splitting up of the AIML into two separate and independent Leagues for Pakistan and India; at first remained in India after partition and toured divided Bengal with Gandhiji in an attempt to halt the bloody riots between Hindus and Muslims; finally settled in Pakistan, December 1947; broke with Muslim League after disagreement with P.M. Liaquat Ali Khan, 1949; organized Awami League and Muslim League Coalition Govt, 1954–55, fifth P.M. of Pakistan 1956–57; launched the National Democratic Front, 1962; arrested in Karachi by the Ayub Regime 30 January 1962, under the security of Pakistan Act and released in August 1962; died on 5 December 1963 at Beirut where he had gone to seek medical attention.

⁴ Azizul Huque, Sir M (1892–1947); educated in Presidency College and University Law College, Calcutta; joined Krishnanagar Bar; rose to Public Prosecutor; Chairman Krishnanagar Municipality, and Vice Chairman, Nadia District Board; was member, Bengal Legislative Council, 1929 (Nadia) and later independently elected in 1937 without any contest; Minister for Education, Bengal, 1934–37; Speaker, Bengal Legislative Assembly, 1937–42, Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, 1928–42; and Head of Department of Islamic History and Culture, Calcutta University, 1940–42;

High Commissioner for India in UK, 1942–43 member, Governor General Council for Food, Commerce, Industry and Civil Supplies, 1943–46; member of various committees like Kamal Yar Jung Committee, Public Accounts Committee, etc; associated with Muslim League; member of League Committee to work out details of Congress–League Scheme 1917–18; member of League delegation to iron out the differences over the Nehru Report (1928); died on 23 March 1947.

⁵ Saadullah (Sir) Syed Mohammad (1885–1955); Saadullah was the son of Syed Mohammad Tayyebullah, Arabic and Persian teacher in Cotton Collegiate High School at Gauhati, and an influential Muslim of the area; he was born at Gauhati, 21 May 1885; educated at Sonaram High School, Gauhati (Entrance); Cotton College, Gauhati; Presidency College, Calcutta (M.Sc. Chemistry, 1906); Earle Law College, Gauhati (B.Law, 1907), knew Arabic, Persian, and Urdu well; Assistant Lecturer of Chemistry, Cotton College Gauhati, 1908; Lawyer, Gauhati Bar, 1909–19; at Calcutta High Court, 1920–24; member, Assam Legislative Council 1913–20 and 1923 (Kamrup and Darrang-Cum-Nowgong-MR); Minister of Education and Agriculture, Assam, 1924–29; Member Executive Council, Assam Govt, for Law and Order & PWD; 1929–30; for Finance, Law and Order, November 1930–April 1934; Chairman, Public Accounts Committee, 1933–34; attended the 10th Session of the AIML (All India Muslim League), Calcutta, December 1917, and appointed member of the Committee to discuss details of Congress-League scheme; Muslim Party member, Assam Legislative Assembly, 1937 (Kamrup South); P.M. (Prime Minister), Coalition Ministry, 1937–September 1938 (replaced by a Congress Govt); had joined Muslim League during this period in response to Jinnah's appeal; again Muslim League P.M., November 1939–June 1942; Muslim League member Assam Legislative Council, 1946 (Kamrup South); leader, Muslim League party in Assam; attended the Muslim League Legislatures Convention, Delhi, April 1946, where he supported the demand for Pakistan, saying that Assam's physical situation was such that it had no choice but to join Pakistan; took part in the League Council meeting, Bombay, in July 1946; member Constituent Assembly (Assam-M); member Constitution Drafting Committee; died on 8 January 1955.

⁶ Mazhar Ali (Azhar, Mazhar Ali) (1895–?); was born in 1895 in Batala district Gurdaspur, Punjab. His father, Abdullah, a Shia Muslim, was a leader of considerable importance and in many ways helped him in his public and political career; Mazhar Ali graduated in 1915 from Government College, Lahore, and did his L.L.B. at the same place from the Law College in 1917; started his career as an advocate in Lahore, 1918; entered into the *Khilafat* movement in 1919; in 1920 he earned an imprisonment for a year and half; in 1929 helped in the establishment of the *Ahrar* Party, the first session of which was held on the Congress Platform; later he become General Secretary of this organization, and then its president; during the Shahidganj Mosque Gurudwara affair in 1935 he fought for Muslim–Sikh unity, condemned the Government for not curbing communalism and thereby won the praise of all the progressive people. He was member of the Punjab legislature from 1924–26, 1934–45, as a member of the All India Congress Committee and General Secretary of the Provincial Congress, he participated in the Civil Disobedience movement and spent a total of four years in jail; in 1946 he resigned from the *Ahrar* Party and joined Forward Block, but he suffered defeat in the elections of 1946; after partition migrated to Pakistan, 1947; he was a great orator, poet and writer, his more important works all in Urdu entitled, *Shia's Twarikh-i-Masjid Shahidganj* and the *Development to our Communal Settlement*.

II. HINDUS

81. On the Hindu Mahasabha Session: Moonje to Jayakar, 4 January 1939

M.R. Jayakar Papers, File No. 6, Part 1, NAI.

Dear Hon'ble Justice Jayakar,

I trust my letter of congratulations sent to your Delhi address and also our letter of invitation for attending the Nagpur session of the Hindu Mahasabha have reached your hands. The session was a brilliant unique success. This session of the Hindu Mahasabha, in point of largeness of attendance, can only be compared with the session of the Congress held in Nagpur in 1920 which was then known for its unprecedented largeness of attendance. The resolutions passed also are well conceived, comprehensive and skillfully drafted. I wonder if you have noted our resolution on Federation and on the defence of India. The resolution on the defence of India is a summary of the constructive suggestions that I have made in my evidence before the Chatfield Committee. I am sure this session must have impressed both the Congress and the Government and also the Muslim League. The League must reconsider and will have to come to the conclusion that its efforts regarding settlement of the Muslim problem with the Congress alone will not bear fruit. It will have to approach the Hindu Mahasabha...

82. The Hindu Mahasabha Agitation and Hyderabad:

Francis Wylie to Linlithgow, 11 January 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2196, NAI.

Camp
11 January 1939

[Extracts]

(Secret)

Dear Lord Linlithgow,

To turn now to the official fortnightly report. The first paragraph deals with the All-India Hindu Mahasabha session held in Nagpur during Christmas holidays. This was a sensational success. There were immense crowds and the reception of the delegates at the railway station was I believe really spectacular. An aeroplane scattered flowers from the sky and there was a great display of volunteers armed with swords and lathis. Most of the other provinces were, I understand, represented but the only important Hindu leaders present were Bhai Parmanand and Mr Gokulchand from the Punjab. Maharashtra—and particularly perhaps Nagpur—is of course a stronghold of the Mahasabha and Dr Moonje—the heart and soul of the organization—is one of our citizens. This smouldering resentment caused by the Khare episode, which may be latent but which is still very strong, gave an added interest to the whole demonstration and was in fact to a large extent responsible for its quite unusual success. I hear that the Wardha crowd were gravely concerned at the strong anti-Congress feeling displayed during the deliberations of the ‘Subjects Committee’ and that they sent an emissary to dissuade the Mahasabha authorities from passing any anti-Congress resolution. Mishra denies this.... It is true of the resolutions passed the most important at the present juncture is perhaps that dealing with the Hyderabad agitation. The Commissioner, Nagpur, writes in this connection:

‘The other notable feature was a formal declaration of political war on Hyderabad State. Hitherto, this Province has only given sporadic support by sending a few batches of volunteers to do satyagraha in Hyderabad. Now the campaign will be organized.’

It remains to be seen what practical steps will be taken to implement the resolution. So far I hear that a sum of about Rs 6,000 has been collected—Dr Khare subscribed Rs 100 and that a large number of young men have responded to the appeal for volunteers—two of whom signed their names in blood! One Jatha of five volunteers is said to have actually started from Poona but that is all we know so far. Whether the Mahasabha will be able to keep the agitation alive and incidentally force the hands of the Congress in the matter is still to be seen. I doubt myself if they will succeed for long though, in the meantime I am afraid that they are bound to cause a good deal of embarrassment in Hyderabad over the question of singing *Bande Mataram* in the hostels. Some expelled students have arrived in Nagpur and that two more are expected any day. The Nagpur University is arranging under the guidance of Mr Kedar, the Congress Vice-Chancellor, for their admission into local educational institutions here. I do not know what to say about... ‘an atmosphere of mistrust and chaos brought about by rude and unwise handling of affairs’—we quote Rabindranath. ‘I am losing that which inspires one to speak loudly’—we hear the voice of the Mahatma. There is the indignant thunder of the poet who is an observer. There is then the sad admission of the politician who is an actor. Out of this sadness, may we hope, will be born a new understanding, sympathy and harmony.



83. On Hindu Mahasabha: B.S. Moonje to J.P. Shrivastava,
12 January 1939

All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML.

Dear Sir J.P. Shrivastava,

Many thanks for your letter of 5th inst. which reached me yesterday. In reply I may frankly tell you that my honest opinion now is that the Moslems having declared for the division of India into Hindu India and Moslem India and the Congress having kept quiet over it so long without even a word of protest against it, there is now no other politics than that of the Hindu Mahasabha. If the Hindus want to survive and do not like to go under, then they must all rally round the banner of the Hindu Mahasabha.

I would be glad to meet you on my way to Delhi when I will be going there to work on the Indian Sandhurst Committee. I know it's a uphill work to try for the Hindu Mahasabha in your province where there is Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Communist leader of the Russian brand; but still we must not lose heart. We must try and trust in God.

84. Hindu-Muslim Problem in Bengal: A Hindu Mahasabhite View,
Ashutosh Lahiry to Savarkar, 24 January 1939

Savarkar Papers, D.2.2 Microfilm Roll No. 34, NMML.

My dear Savarkarji,

I hope you have received my last letter dated 21.1.39. The Hindu-Moslem problem in Bengal, as you probably know, differs from other provinces in some essential respects and it is well that you should know it. The vast mass of Moslems were once all Hindus belonging to the backward classes and it was due to the social tyranny of the high caste Hindus that they gradually embraced Islam. Hindu culture was confined to the high caste Hindus, while the backward classes were deprived of the light of the Hindu religion owing to the isolation and intolerance of the high caste Hindus. Bengal as you know became wholly Buddhistic and in its later days Buddhism degenerated into a worship of stones, trees and animals and the mass of Bengal Hindus followed this belief and performed these worships. Subsequently when Hinduism or Brahminism reestablished its hold on Bengal, no efforts were made however to propagate its noble precepts amongst the mass of the Hindu community and when the Moslems came the proselytization zeal of its religious preachers easily succeeded in converting them into Islam.

Such being the case, the vast majority of Moslems in the villages in Bengal live on most intimate terms with the Hindus, and it is only the propaganda and the ambition of the political power of the educated section of the Moslem community that are responsible for all the communal dissensions in the province. The Moslem masses left to themselves would easily be amenable to Hindu influence. Culturally, ethnologically and historically these Moslems are as good as Hindus and we want to proclaim from the Khulna Conference that the Moslems of Bengal are as good as Hindus and it is due to the social intolerance of the Hindu leaders that they have gone over to the Islamic fold and we should resolve to invite them to realize their essential blood relationship with their Hindu brothers and appeal to the Hindus to give them an honoured place in their society.

I am sure such a call from the Conference would have a salutary psychological effect on the Moslem masses.

As regards the youth of Bengal, I would like to inform you that most of the released detenues and political prisoners are either communists or socialists. We expect that your speech should

clearly explain the dangers of communism with its materialistic philosophy based on purely economic motives of man, devoid of religion and culture. Besides any efforts to divide India on an economic basis and form political parties purely on that line would menace India's internal solidarity. The danger of internationalism should be emphasized and efforts to weaken the force of nationalism should be deprecated. These communists and socialists are international in political outlook. It is due to the absence of nationalism that India had been enslaved to foreign nations at the various stages of her past history. India has been always cosmopolitan and she had to pay heavily for such liberal political mentality. The communists want again to bring back those days which have wrought untold sufferings to India. By actual historical instances you can reinforce this point.

As regards the measure of political power that has already been made over to Indian hands, there is a very clear propaganda that it is due to the Congress sacrifice and Congress struggle for freedom that this measure of political power has been achieved. It will be very helpful if you would attack this claim and expose its hollowness and emphasize the part played by the sufferings and longings for freedom of the youths of Bengal, Punjab, and other provinces, long before the Congress accepted Independence as their political goal. A reasoned attack on the Gandhi philosophy would have very powerful appeal to the youths of this province, and the exposure of the Congress claim that it is through their struggles and sufferings alone that independence has been brought within sight would create a very favourable background and would go straight to the hearts of the youths.

Incidentally you should also refer to the fight against British Imperialism, how the Hindus have alone carried it on and how it has been thwarted by the Moslems and the Congress policy has actually encouraged the Moslems in their opposition to the Hindus' fight against British Imperialism, etc., etc.

As regards backward classes, you are probably aware that the Brahmins, the Kayasthas, and the Vaidyas—the three high class Hindus are barely twenty five lacs out of a total Hindu population of about two crores and twenty five lacs. The Navasakhs or such castes as potters, carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, the baniyas, barbers, the Sahas, etc. form an intermediate community—whose water is touchable but they are not counted amongst the higher castes—their number being about ninety lacs. The remaining crore and ten lacs are backward classes or what are now called scheduled classes. Your address should have some mention of these classes and of the Hindu Mahasabha's programme for their uplift. We expect that these people—particularly the Namasudras who are virile agriculturists—will attend in their thousands and it would be fitting if you have some encouraging words for them.

85. Cawnpore Riots: Press Statement for Publication, 20 February 1939

Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, pp. 253–57, NMML.

Mr Ganpat Rai, Hony Secy Hindu Mahasabha on his return from Cawnpore has released to the Press the following report about the recent riot on account of the Muslim aggression on the Hindus:

'To have a first hand knowledge of the happening at Cawnpore, the genesis of the riot, the assault, murders and the after-effects of the Muslim aggression on the Hindus by their attack on marriage party since 7th February 1939, I, accompanied by P. Jagdish Mittar Koshal, visited Cawnpore on the 18th and 19th of February 1939. We were joined by Pt Surendernath Bajpai, General Secretary, UP Provincial Hindu Sabha, Lucknow.

'As no connected version of the trouble has so far appeared, it is necessary to have a review of the whole matter in order to grasp the whole situation thoroughly and with a view to adopt

precautionary measures for the prevention of such acts of Muslim aggression not only at Cawnpore and in UP but in the rest of India also.

‘The trouble arose on the evening of the 7th Feb., when a Hindu marriage procession approached the Bansmandi Mosque, Cawnpore at about 6 p.m. The band accompanying the “Barat” was asked by some Muslims to stop playing until it had passed the mosque and the bandman complied. As soon as the band reached opposite the mosque it started playing again and a number of Muslims thereupon attacked and drove back the procession. This claim on the part of the Muslims was asserted for the first time at Cawnpore and the marriage party which was escorted by a police guard of 4 constables under the police license was not protected by the police nor were the Muslim aggressors arrested, although 28 persons of the marriage party were injured and the jewellery on the person of the bride-groom looted by them. This indifference of the Police is ascribed to the communal bias of the Muslim constables whose proportion is about 80%. When the Dist Magistrate and other Officers reached the spot they were advised by some of the Congress leaders to promulgate Section 144 of the CrPC for settling the disputes. The Dist Magistrate thereupon promulgated Section 144 for two days, prohibiting music before Bansmandi Mosque so that the Muslims should have to substantiate their claim. The Hindus observed Hartal on the 8, 9 over the stoppage of music before Bansmandi Mosque. The Dist Magistrate’s finding runs as follows:

‘... The police records show that when trouble occurred in front of this mosque in 1932 no such claim was put forward. It must therefore be held that the claim that music has never been allowed in front of the Bansmandi Mosque has not been substantiated.’

‘In spite of this decision the Dist Magistrate showed difficulty to escort the marriage procession safely through its route via Bansmandi Mosque till 14th and 15th February 1939. In the meanwhile the Mohammedans were making full preparation to make another attack on the Hindus and their property. The Hindus on the other hand after the decisions of the Dist Magistrate opened their shops on the 11th February, when in the evening another Hindu Barat which had come to Cawnpore from Hardoi District was being taken out in procession via Moolgani mosque, under the police escort and police license, was attacked by the Muslims. The Muslims who attacked the marriage procession were putting on garlands as soon as they came out of the mosque armed with lathis and other arms. They not only attacked and looted the marriage party and procession but also the Hindus shops and the innocent passers-by. This was a signal for the Muslims to declare a Jihad (Crusade) on the Hindus. The tragedy of the thing was that the police escorts that has accompanied the marriage party again remained inactive and acted as spectators to the highhandedness of the Muslims on the defenseless and unwary Hindus. This attack continued on 12th and 13th when the climax of the tragedy was enacted by a Nawab of Gawal Toli on the Hindu labourers of the new Victoria mills who were returning from their mills on the morning of the 13th because it was declared a holiday. In this general massacre about 70 of the labourers received gun-shots. The Police which is predominantly Muslims did not lag behind in opening fire on the Hindu labourers. The official statement shows that 42 persons have been killed out of whom 32 are Hindus, and 240 persons have been wounded out of whom about 150 are Hindus. But the non-official figure as supplied to me on 18th February, 1939 by no less a person than Pt Raghbar Dyal Bhatta, a Municipal Commissioner and a responsible Congress man, shows that no less than 50 Hindus were killed and over 200 Hindus were injured. The following are some of the grievances of the Hindus which are still outstanding:

1. The Muslim offenders have not so far been arrested although they committed the offence under the very nose of the Police.

2. The Hindu Ministers, including the Premier have not paid visit to Cawnpore, although both the Muslim Ministers came during the riot, secretly met the Mohammedans and went back.
3. No satisfactory arrangement has been made for the protection of the Hindus during the Moharam when they apprehended another attack from the Muslims.
4. The Hindu marriage processions are not being permitted as is evident from a telegram by one Sitaram to the Hindu Sabha, Cawnpore, informing that the police refused permission.
5. Lastly but not the least important is their (Hindus') demand for increase in the Police service strength, and they are expecting that the 14,000 supplementary grant would be spent by the Premier in raising the proportion of the Hindus in the UP Police service.'

86. Bihar Hindu Conference

Behar Herald, 21 March 1939.

The eighth session of the Bihar Provincial Hindu Conference, held at Monghyr under the presidentship of V.D. Savarkar, has decided to contest all future elections to Legislatures and Local Bodies in opposition to Congress candidates. The Conference also has protested against the Congress move to introduce 'Hindusthani' as a 'hybrid' language and has appealed to the Hindus to use only Hindi based on Sanskrit and written in Devanagri script.

Is it true?

In a speech delivered at the Hindu Conference, Mr V.D. Savarkar is reported to have said: 'I declare here publicly that Mahatma Gandhi, far from condemning the victimization of Hindu students of the Osmania University for the crime of singing "Bande mataram" song, had written to Mr Kedar, Vice-Chancellor of the Nagpur University, demanding an explanation why Mr Kedar had taken in the expelled students from Hyderabad. That shows what the mentality of Gandhiji and Congress is.'

87. The Bihar Hindu Sabha: Proceedings of the Bihar Provincial Hindu Conference Held at Monghyr

Searchlight, 28 March 1939.

27 March 1939

Attendance was larger and enthusiasm more marked when the Bihar Provincial Hindu Conference reassembled this afternoon at the scheduled time. The atmosphere today was surcharged with a spirit of challenge to the Congress and speaker after speaker denounced the Congress and the Congress Government of Bihar for what they characterized as the policy of favouritism towards the Muslims at the expense of the Hindus.

Moonje who addressed the conference at the conclusion of today's proceedings, struck an original note when he appealed to the Hindus to discard the leadership of Gandhi in all political matters. His appeal, however, was received with strong silence although he was lustily cheered when he condemned what he called Muslim atrocities on Hindus and appealed to the Hindus to bring back their ancient glory.

By more than one resolution, the conference openly raised today the standard of revolt against the Congress. The resolution foreshadowed Congress-Hindu Sabha contests in all future elections.

Pandit Bharat Misra then moved the following resolutions:

This Conference views with alarm that Hindu members of the legislatures and local bodies, elected exclusively by Hindu electorates, have been flagrantly disregarding the interests of the Hindu community in the discharge of their duties. By surrendering to the unjust and progressively rising demands of the Muslims in respect of the latter's representation in public services and public bodies, these representatives of the Hindu community have been acting in a manner detrimental to the interests of the Hindus and the country.

This Conference records its emphatic protest against the policy of the Hindu Congressmen of showing partiality to Muslims in utter disregard of the principle of nationalism, and calls upon the Hindus generally to prepare themselves for the establishment of an independent Hindu state in India.

This Conference calls upon the Hindu electorates to elect only such Hindus to the legislatures and local bodies who will protect the rights and interests of the Hindus besides fighting for the independence of this country.

This Conference, therefore, requests all political organizations of Hindus to unite on occasions of all future elections and set up, by common consent, only such candidates as will truly represent Hindus. This Conference calls upon the Hindu electorate to elect such candidates alone in preference to all others who may be set up by other organizations.

II

Searchlight, 28 March 1939.

The third day's proceedings of the eighth session of the Bihar Provincial Hindu Sammelan began today with the usual opening hymns and songs.

The President, Vir Savarkar, congratulated Bihar on its magnificent response to the Hindu Sabha's appeal for men and money to continue the Hyderabad Satyagraha. Four resolutions were then passed. Put from the Chair they recommended the All India Mahasabha to establish *Anathalayas* throughout the country, to take up educational and social uplift of the Santhal population, organize branches of the Sabha in every Thana and establish Hindu homes and *Patitpavan Mandirs* throughout the country—open to all denominations of the Hindu society. An announcement of the reported resignation of a Congress member from the United Provinces Legislatures as a protest against the Congress government's attitude in regard to Hindu interests and sentiments was greeted with thundering applause from the whole audience....

Raghunandan Prasad then proposed and Shivanandan Paswan seconded a resolution demanding equal social and political rights for Harijans. Shivanandan said that Hindu energy was being fruitlessly frittered away in placating and courting Muslims and it should better be utilized in strengthening the Hindus by unifying the Harijans and together winning freedom....

Next came a resolution regarding the economic programme. The resolution said:

This conference is of the opinion that the economic uplift of the masses is impossible so long as the basic causes of their poverty are not removed, prices of agricultural produces are not raised and cheaper credit not made available for them. And whereas the present policy of the Bihar Government and the avowed programme of the Congress have created a feeling of uncertainty, highly discouraging for new investment and ventures, and a class war has been needlessly fomented due to which the industrialization of the country is bound to be postponed for a long time to come, this conference requests the Hindu Mahasabha to lay down as its present policy that it is as much necessary to protect the rights of the tenantry and labour as to safeguard the legitimate interests of the landlords and the capitalists so that the resources of the nation be not frittered away at this critical juncture, but duly conserved for making an all-round progress.

This conference, therefore, requests the Hindu Mahasabha to place the following programme of action for the present: (a) propagation of Swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods as far as practicable, (b) agitation for the reduction of exchange to sixteen pence a rupee, (c) collection of statistics of the unemployed Hindus and the possible work in which they may be engaged profitably, (d) introduction of such works including cottage and small scale industries for the absorption of landless labour and the unemployed Hindus, (e) assurance of at least living wages for all labour, agricultural and industrial, (f) popularizing the employment of Hindus as far as possible to ameliorate unemployment among them and (g) making rural life healthy and happy....

88. Hindu Sabha Pretensions

Editorial, *Searchlight*, 28 March 1939.

7 March 1939

Denunciation of Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress and the Congress Ministry in Bihar was the keynote of the speeches made and the resolutions adopted at the recent session of the Bihar Provincial Hindu Mahasabha at Monghyr. Vir Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's standpoint has never been in doubt. He has been crystal-clear in all his utterances. He will have Hindu Raj in India, nothing less and, of course, nothing more. He does not believe in understanding with the Musalmans. He would ruthlessly suppress Moslem intransigences and sternly put down Muslim aggression. His logic drives him to be at one with Mr Jinnah in enunciating the absurd doctrine that Hindus and Moslems are two nations, religiously, culturally and politically. Hindus are Hindus and Moslems are Moslems and never the twain shall meet. That is his creed and his cult. It is likewise the creed of the Moslem communalist and both Mr Savarkar and Mr Jinnah embrace each other on this common platform of theirs. Mr Savarkar forgets that India of today is the creation of the past—remote and recent—and that we, of the present generation, have no clean slate to write upon. Much as Hindus may wish to see the revival of the glory that was India on a purely Hindu basis, it will remain a pious wish, nothing more than a wistful pursuit of a phantom that eludes the more it is pursued. It will be like flying after a will-o' the wisp, a dangerous proceeding because the antagonisms that it is bound to create and foster will definitely place the objective beyond the hope of realization. It is true Moslem aggressiveness, the extreme communalism of their leaders and their ever-growing mass have created a situation in which susceptibility to doctrines such as those enunciated on Hindu Sabha platforms is understandable. But it would be foolish to be stampeded or hustled. The Moslem mind of today is the creation of British Imperialism, is the product of careful nursing and the result of calculated effort. Should Hindus decide to do the Moslems the honour of imitation, it is British Imperialism that will triumph. Hindus will have the satisfaction that they have upset the Moslem apple-cart but they will have sold away the Hindus, body and soul, to their British masters. It is because the Hindus in general appreciate the position that they have refused to accept the leadership of the Hindu Sabha and will, we have no doubt, refuse to transfer their allegiance to Mr Savarkar from Mahatma Gandhi.

One specific point in Mr Savarkar's presidential address we must specifically protest against, namely, the outrageous allegation that the tribal raids on Hindus in the Frontier Province were possible because of the connivance of the Ministry in that province. Those who know Dr Khan Sahab, his high-mindedness, his freedom from all narrow-mindedness, his sustained sacrifices and his steadfast adherence to the Congress and to the ideal of Indian Nationalism, despite repudiation by the over-whelming bulk of his co-religionists, will be ashamed that such a deliberate reflection should have been made on his personal honour by one who claims to be the leader of the Hindu. Another observation in Mr Savarkar's speech, which we must specifically notice, is the one

complaining that Congressmen posing to be Nationalists suddenly became Hindus during elections and had no hesitation in going exclusively to Hindu voters for votes. Mr Savarkar ought to know that Congressmen do not believe in posing. They go exclusively to Hindu voters because under the constitution they need to go, and as Nationalists they have nothing to conceal and nothing to equivocate about. During the last elections to the Central Legislature Assembly, they fought the Hindu Mahasabha on the issue of the Communal Award and pulverized it. Nor was the vote received merely a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. The writer is in a position to bear personal testimony to the fact that educated and enlightened voters in Patna preferred the Congress candidates to the Hindu Sabha stalwarts with their eyes open. There is, therefore, no question of people so elected forgetting after their election that they were representatives of the Hindus. Congressmen are elected on the basis of a definite policy and programme. There is no reservation about it. And as long as they stand by them, no charge of betrayal or backsliding can be laid at their doors. It is a pity that a man of the intelligence of Mr Savarkar should be labouring under the delusion that the Hindus of India are not behind the Congress and that their vote is determined by Mahatma Gandhi's personality alone.

It is obvious of course that the Monghyr Conference was a preparation for the next elections. That was the trend of the principal speeches....

89. Dividing India into Communal Zones: Moonje's Opposition to Scheme

Leader, 3 April 1939.

New Delhi
1 April 1939

There has been no great reaction among the legislators to the publication by the *Statesman* of the scheme produced by Dr Latif of Hyderabad dividing India into communal zones. But Mr Moonje, leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, speaking at a public meeting discountenanced the efforts to divide India into communal regions and described the scheme as a real danger which the Congress should not ignore. Muslims and Hindus of all shades of opinion must ponder over the new situation which had been rendered more difficult by encouragement that the scheme of partition of India was receiving from the British Government's attitude such as that disclosed in regard to Czechoslovakia. Referring to the Indian States' problem, Dr Moonje was against introduction of responsible Government in Hindu States while conditions in Hyderabad and other Muslim States verged on medievalism.

As regards the communal situation in the United Provinces, Dr Moonje referred to his own personal observations there and said that the UP Government had failed to safeguard the life and property of Hindus. He was inclined, therefore, to suggest that in Hindu provinces only the Hindu Mahasabha should run the Government. Bhai Parmanand who presided generally endorsed the views of Dr Moonje.

90. 'Pro-Muslim Policy of Congress Government': Hindus' Meeting at Lucknow

Leader, 5 April 1939.

Under the auspices of the 'Aminabad Hindu Sabha', Lucknow, a public meeting of the Hindus was held on 31 March, at 7 p.m. in the evening under the chairmanship of Mr Mahesh Charan Sinha.

The following resolutions were passed unanimously:

1. This Sabha congratulates both the Hindu ministers of the Sind Assembly on resigning their seats in the Cabinet with a view to safeguard Hindu interests and preserve the culture, ideals, rights, honour of the Hindus, and assures them of the appreciation and sympathy of the Hindus of the whole of India.

This Sabha congratulates Pandit Krishna Nath Kaul on his resigning from the Congress party after having realized that the religious, social, political and civil rights of the Hindus are being jeopardized and forfeited under the Congress regime and hopes that all such members of the Assembly as like Mr Kaul realize the danger to Hindu society under the pro-Muslim policy of the Congress Government will similarly have the courage to resign from the Congress party and stand by the Hindus at this hour of peril.

2. This Sabha appreciates and admires the boldness with which Sir J.P. Srivastava advocated the cause of the Hindus in the Assembly and pointed out the loss of life and property to the Hindu community during the Muslim riots in Cawnpore, which had been hidden from the public eyes through the policy of the present Government. This Sabha considers this action of Sir J.P. Srivastava praiseworthy, especially because there was no one else to ventilate this Hindu grievance in spite of there being so many Hindus in the Assembly.

This Sabha condemns the vulgarity and violence of such of the Congress members and their sympathizers which they created at Kaisarbagh Baradari, Lucknow, and deprecates the veiled threat and coercion exercised by the Congress party in suppressing and discouraging Sir J.P. Srivastava and others against advocating the cause of Hindus in the Assembly and exposing the weakness of the Government in protecting the Hindu rights, life and property.

3. This Sabha assures Sir J.P. Srivastava and other such members who may have the courage to defend the Hindu cause in the Assembly of its full support and cooperation and hopes that they will fearlessly uphold the Hindu cause and guard their interest.

91. B.S. Moonje¹ on Communal Troubles: B.S. Moonje's Statement on Communal Troubles and Muslim League's Proposed Federation'

Leader, 6 April 1939.

New Delhi
1 April 1939

Dr B.S. Moonje, on his return from Benares, issued a statement to the press in the course of which he observed:

'On an urgent and pressing invitation I visited Benares on my way back from the Monghyr Hindu Sabha Conference in company with Babu Padam Raj Jain, general secretary, Hindu Mahasabha.

'I studied the situation regarding the communal head-breakings and stabbings that are going on at present at Benares. I had long consultations with several leading people of the town who had assembled to meet us. My impressions are that the Congress Government have lamentably failed to give protection to the Hindus and to maintain law and order, and that the Hindus are panic-stricken and do not know how to have relief from stealthy stabbings in the back. They feel they can cope with *lathi* attacks quite well, but it is not in their culture to stab innocent people from behind stealthily....

'But the point is: is it really a communal trouble? Should it have been so, why should there have been such communal troubles all over India as if organized to order and maintain a time-table

simultaneously in several places throughout India? Would it not be a proper appreciation of the situation, if it were to be designated as a civil war as already threatened by the Moslems against the Hindus with the object of frightening them on one side and the Government on the other to surrender and agree to the Moslem proposals of dividing India into two nations as Hindu India and Moslem India? Just about this time, the Moslem League in their conference at Meerut have announced their draft proposals for such division of India and they have called upon the Paramount Power to set aside the present Government of India Act of 1935 and to enact another Act in its place, providing for such partition of India.

‘The Congress which takes pride in being the supreme political organization of the country has consistently maintained silence over these Moslem proposals, thereby giving the people an idea that perhaps silence means consent. It does not appear to be an impossibility with the Congress even to agree to such proposals when the Congress having accepted the Communal Award by their silence and neutrality. Mahatma Gandhi could approach Mr Jinnah with bended knees and folded hands. Let it be whatever it may be so far as the Congress is concerned, but there should be no misunderstanding that the Hindu Mahasabha will ever agree to any such suicidal and provocative proposals. The Mahasabha feels sure that in spite of the hold of the Mahatma and the Congress on the Hindu mind, the Hindus will die to a man in maintaining the solidarity and integrity of their Motherland. Should this not be enough to open the eyes even of the Mahatma and the Congress? Their attempts during the last 20 years from the time when they made the saving of the Khilafat their own sacred cause, and when they declared from the housetop that there can be no Swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity, have borne their natural fruit: for what else could be expected of the Moslems who are by temperament incapable of understanding spiritual unity on the basis of non-violence as expounded by Mahatma Gandhi? The Moslems can go on further to poison the national life of India. Now there can be no possibility of any Hindu-Moslem unity. The Moslems have thus demonstrated without any equivocation or ambiguity that they are not in unison with the Congress scheme of evolution of India as a united nation. Now, how can the Congress be a national body in the sense of its representing both the Hindus and the Moslems? Has not the time arrived for the mergence of the Congress in the Hindu Mahasabha and of the Hindu Mahasabha in the Congress? The danger and a calamity faces us just as England had to face it before its present national Government and the Moslems are determined to follow their own way, irrespective of violence or non-violence.

‘It does not free the Congress from its own responsibility in the matter by declaring that these communal disturbances are inspired by the two communal bodies, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. The Muslim League refuses to accept that the Moslems of India are a mere community. They aspire to be known and treated as a separate nation. If such is the fact then the Hindus naturally are driven to the category of another nation unless they were to choose and the Congress were to advise them to choose to be a mere community under the domination of Islamic nation in India....’

¹ B.S. Moonje (1872–1948); an eye specialist turned politician, he worked for the national as well as the Hindu cause; was born at Bilaspur, Madhya Pradesh and was educated at Nagpur and Bombay; offered his services during the Boer War and lived with Gandhiji at Durban, 1900. He started medical practice at Nagpur, 1901; organized the CP Provincial Conference, 1904; was influenced by Tilak and took part in the Home Rule movement, 1917; was imprisoned during the Forest Satyagraha; joined the Hindu Mahasabha and later became its President; was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly, 1926; which he resigned in 1930; attended the Indian Round Table Conference, 1931–32; signed the Moonje–Raja pact regarding Harijan representation and represented the Hindu Mahasabha on Joint Parliamentary Committee, 1933; established the Hindu Military Education Society and the Bhonsla Military School in Nasik, 1937; wrote *Netra Chikitsa* in Sanskrit.

92. Facts About Gaya Communal Riots, 6 May 1939:
Bihar Government's Reply to the Muslim League's Allegations
Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 1-B/39, S. No. 64, 65 & 66, NAI.

This note embodies:

- I. The statement of facts made on behalf of Government by Mr Krishna Ballabh Sahay, Parliamentary Secretary, in the Bihar Legislative Assembly during the debate on the adjournment motion to discuss the communal disturbances which broke out in Gaya town on the 6th May, 1939;
- II. Government's reply to the allegations made by the General Secretary of the District Muslim League, Gaya; and
- III. the text of the Muslim League's allegations. These have been put together in the form of a note in order to enable all concerned to get at the real facts.

I. Statement of Facts Made In the Assembly on Behalf of Government:

The following is the full text of the statement of facts made on behalf of Government by Mr Krishna Ballabh Sahay, Parliamentary Secretary, in the Bihar Legislative Assembly on the 16th May, 1939, during the debate on the adjournment motion to discuss the communal disturbances in Gaya Town:

Sir, the immediate cause of the communal out-break in Gaya town has already been noticed in the Press. A pot of burning beef fell on a Hindu minor girl named Sumitra near Mcleodganj town out-post at about 4.30 p.m. on the 6th May, 1939. The Muhammadans alleged that one Sabdul Mian having quarreled with his wife threw the pot from his *kotha* which fell on the girl below. The allegation of the Hindus was that it was deliberately thrown at her. Hindu and Muslim mobs collected at the place, but through the immediate intervention of the police they were both dispersed. The father of the girl, Mohan Sahu, took her to the *Kotwali* where an entry was made and then got her admitted in the hospital and in order to avoid communal tension, Sabdul Mian, was taken to the police station. But the incident caused considerable and wide excitement throughout the town. The Superintendent of police was informed and he came to the *Kotwali* immediately. The number of Police men available in the town was small as some had been sent out in connection with district board elections but those that were available were ordered to be placed as pickets according to the Emergency Scheme. I would like to explain here what the Emergency Scheme is. In every town there is a scheme by which police are sent whenever an emergency arises. I would further like to point out that this Emergency Scheme in Gaya town was prepared some years back by Mr Morris, an Anglo-Indian, when he was Superintendent of Police. They began to move at 6 p.m. and were out at 7 p.m.

When the District Magistrate who had been immediately informed came near Chhata Masjid, he witnessed large crowds at each junction on the road and also on the roofs of houses brandishing lathis and exchanging brickbats, with a few policemen trying to disperse the crowd. He and Mr Whittaker, who had not left Gaya as yet, stopped there and charged the crowd which was dispersed. Four policemen were injured and the Town Inspector got a fracture in his finger. But the communal frenzy seemed to have seized the town. At 5.15 p.m. Madan Mohan, son of a well-known townsman, Babu Suraj Prasad Mahajan, was severely assaulted by Muhammadans. This added to the communal agitation and set the whole town aflame and fighting between both communities started in the different mohallas.

Besides placing police pickets according to the Emergency Scheme two motor cars were requisitioned. Two Magistrates who were in the town were immediately summoned and sent out

with patrol parties. An order under section 144 CrPC prohibiting the carrying of any weapons and assembly of more than five persons on the public road, was issued. A proclamation imposing a curfew order prohibiting movements on roads and public places between sunrise and sunset through the municipal town was proclaimed. Patna was informed to send more police and Magistrates. The District Magistrate himself visited the localities where there were rumours of riots. People were warned against originating or repeating false rumours. The services of four of the European and Anglo-Indian residents, each of whom was put in charge of an armed patrol party on motor cars were obtained. The town was patrolled throughout the night. But the number of police and Magistrates was insufficient and picketing and patrol were not as effective as they could have been wished. The District Board elections were going on and most of the Magistrates and a large number of policemen were out on election duty. In the latter part of the night some police re-inforcement consisting of some armed men and 15 Mounted Military Police arrived and the pickets were strengthened. But stray assaults and looting and arson continued in the night. An outer verandah of a Marwari's shop, not far from *Kotwali*, was seen on fire and a number of men were throwing brickbats on the houses in the locality. The District Magistrate dispersed the crowd and put out the fire. Both he and Mr Whittaker received slight injuries, in doing this work. At 1.30 a.m. Mr Whittaker found that logs of wood belonging to a Muhammadan kept in a yard in Gayawalbiga were on fire. With the help of some men and a party of armed police he brought the fire under control. He also discovered a Muhammadan lying killed near a well where he had gone to fetch water to put out the fire. When the District Magistrate visited Mahalla Pahsi, he saw that sites on the roofs of the houses of several Muhammadans had been damaged during the night; and that goats, ducks and a number of fowls had been killed and thrown into the drains. This brings the narrative of the 6th night to close.

The following incident took place on the 7th of May, 1939. Some Muhammadans assaulted the Pujari of the Dukharni temple and his brother when they went to do the morning worship and this news, together with the rumour that the temple had been damaged, brought crowds of Hindus and Muhammadans there. They were, however, dispersed by the Gurkha Military Police. Not far from the *Kotwali* Police station the Magistrate saw a large body of Hindus armed with lathis, shouting and running excitedly. They were dispersed. Subsequently he heard that the excitement was caused by Nawab Mustafa's firing his gun. The Nawab denied having fired the gun but admitted to have taken out the gun with a view to threaten the mob. The gun was seized from him. Two Hindu crowds near the gates of the houses of late Rai Bindeshwari Prasad and Rai Hari Prasad Lal were chased. Having received 54 Gurkha Military Police and 15 Military Police from Ranchi and a few of the Magistrates having been called back from the mufassil, the District Magistrate was able to picket the town better and to control it. 63 persons were enrolled as special constables. Magistrates from Ranchi, Daltonganj and Deoghar arrived in the course of the night and further police reinforcement also arrived. The Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Southern Range and the Commissioner visited the town. Numerous houses were searched and several deadly weapons and a large number of lathis were recovered and a large number of Goondas were arrested.

The total number of deaths either in the Hospital or otherwise was 10 up till the 7th.

The 8th was a quiet day. Intensive picketing began and patrol was conducted all the 24 hours. There were chances of clash between a Muslim and a Hindu mob near Gayawalbiga, but the police and the Magistrate reached there in time and dispersed them. A few instances of brickbat-throwing happened during the night. A dead body of a Muhammadan was discovered who, the Civil Surgeon held, must have died several days ago. A Muhammadan who was passing Kirani Ghat was assaulted by the Hindus. The police force was rushed and arrests were made.

On the 9th the situation was fully under control. Whenever any incidents happened the police and Magistrates were immediately on the scene before anything serious took place. In one of the Muhammadan houses searched, 2 grenades 3 swords and 8 lathis were recovered. Vigilance Committees for each *Mohalla* were formed, with a central conciliation committee, consisting of the one Hindu and one Muslim from each ward with the District Magistrate as President. The only important event of the day was the discovery of a dead body of an old Hindu woman outside the municipal area near the Ramsila Hill. There was an attempt at setting fire to a house in Marufganj and one or two cases of throwing brickbats.

Two of the injured Muslims succumbed in the hospital and a dead body was discovered in a well in Fatehganj on the 10th. The man had died a few days earlier and the body was decomposed and the Civil Surgeon was unable to say if he was a Hindu or a Muhammadan.

The total number of persons injured during the four days was 124, of whom 81 were Muhammadans and 43 Hindus. The total number of post-mortems conducted was 16, out of which there was doubt about two cases being the result of communal riots, leaving a total of 14. Of these one was a Hindu and 12 Muhammaddans and one was unrecognized.

Sir, these are the facts of the incident. Since I have got a few minutes more left at my disposal I would like to say one or two words more. In the first place, I would like to say that instead of condemning the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, I think they deserve to be thanked. Obviously and admittedly riot of a very serious type had broken out in the town. The whole town was taken by surprise. Nobody was prepared for it and from our experience of riots, I think that if the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police had not been vigilant and had not exerted themselves probably even now the riot would not have been controlled and it would have been no surprise even if it had spread in other towns. On the other hand the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police by their vigilance and stern action were able to suppress the riot within thirty-six hours. I think they ought to be congratulated instead of being condemned. Now a few words regarding the various points raised by Mr Jafar, Imam. He has said that the police pickets were placed in Muslim *Mohallas* only and not in Hindu *Mohallas*.

Mr Saiyid Jafar Imam: I did not say that, I said the pickets were actually in places where there no murders or assaults.

Mr K.B. Sahay: I was going to say, Sir, that wherever murders took place, they have all taken place in *Mohallas* which are inhabited predominately by Hindus.

The allegation that is made is that those *Mohallas* were not picketed and the other *Mohallas* were picketed where Muslims are found in predominance. Now, it has already been pointed out that the police pickets were placed according to the Emergency Scheme already existing in the town. That Emergency Scheme was prepared, as I have said, by Mr Morris and it was revised from time to time, even in the time of the Mr Whittaker, a European in whom Mr Jafar Imam has expressed confidence. What else could be done? Whenever there were crowds the police and the Magistrate rushed to disperse the crowds. But, Sir, it was impossible to prevent stray assaults, and the murders that have taken place as a result of stray assaults. Wherever crowds collected they were dispersed, but the stray assaults could not be prevented in a town consisting of a population of fifty thousand people.

Much capital has been made on the fact that 63 persons were enrolled as special constables. Well, Sir, being a Parliamentary Secretary I am not in a position to serve as a special constable just now, but I can assure my friend and anybody who may care to listen to me that, if, unfortunately, any riot breaks out in my town, I shall offer my services first to serve as a special constable. If we consider this Government to be our own and national Government, I think everyone of us should enlist himself and help the police in the restoration of law and order. After all what were the

special constables called upon to do? They were vested with special powers. They had got the power of the Sub-Inspectors of Police. In order to quell the riots these persons had been vested with special powers. Now special powers could only be enjoyed by special police officers. Therefore, I regret very much that in some quarters, whether Congress or non-Congress, there were protests against enlistment of special constables. But I would like to urge before you that in any country, if people have got a correct idea of their civic responsibilities, then whenever there is any emergency, whenever there is a riot, I think every one has to feel proud to be enlisted as a special constable. Then only can normal condition be made to prevail.

One more point regarding people visiting the hospital and the jails. Sir, in the jail at Gaya there were 345 persons. When Mr Jafar Imam went there, there must have been not less than 300 persons. Now, supposing all these 300 persons had been, during those days of stress and strain, allowed to have interview what would have been the position? They all could not have been allowed interviews because it was impossible and, therefore, Mr Jafer Imam should not have demanded for himself a concession or privilege which could not be granted or extended to others; and I think the jail authorities did act wisely in not granting him permission. But I may inform him that later on when the situation became quieter he would have got the permission to have interviews. As a matter of fact, the President of the Muslim League, Mr Maziz, saw all the prisoners and spoke a few kind words to them and helped in the restoration of peace and tranquility. Therefore, I only say that it was not possible to grant interviews to private individuals. That is the reason he was not permitted to see prisoners. As regards the question why people were not permitted to see prisoners in the hospital, the fact is that in the hospital the accommodation was small. Now, supposing there were 124 people in the hospital and supposing five or six persons wanted to see each one of them, and if permission were given to all of them to see them, then probably there would have been a little Hindu-Muslim fracas in the hospital itself. So no one can take pleasures in these occurrences. It is a disgraceful thing for all of us; and I say anybody who saw these people in the hospital would have got a heart if he had none, and if his heart were made of stone it would have melted at the sight of these poor people. It gives us thought so that we might pause and think out as to how to find out a remedy for ending this evil. Therefore, I would invite the co-operation of my Hon'ble friends in solving this knotty problem instead of trying to condemn the activities of those concerned with quelling the riots.

II. Government's Reply to the Muslim League's Allegations:

The following is the Government's reply to the allegations made by the General Secretary of the District Muslim League Gaya:

The Government of Bihar have received from the General Secretary of the District Muslim League, Gaya, a statement issued by him on the subject of the Gaya riots. This statement was also published in the newspaper '*Star of India*' on the 27th May 1939. Before dealing with the contents of that statement, it is necessary to comment upon the headlines under which it appeared in the '*Star of India*'. It was headed with the caption 'Helpless Muslim women and children murdered'. This statement is completely false and without foundation. No Muslim women or children were killed during the riots. One woman only lost her life and she was a Hindu—a Telin by caste.

The statement itself is full of inaccuracies and distortions. We are noting below the allegations and our reply to each. The occurrence of the riots has been ascribed to the celebration of 'Hyderabad Day' by the Hindus in the town, the hoisting of the Congress flag on the City School on 'Independence Day' and the singing of 'Bande Matram' in the Zilla School.

The history of the communal troubles in Gaya dated back to the year 1937, when a communal riot took place in Aurangabad. The tension was later accentuated by the demonstrations made in

the same year on the arrival of Mr Jinnah at Gaya, wherein armed procession was taken out and he was presented with a naked sword. Since then the local leaders of the Muslim League have engaged in an intensive campaign which has not tended to promote communal goodwill and frequent meetings have been held in mosques, where the police could not report the speeches, and elsewhere at which communal hatred was preached. Towards the end of the year 1938, the speeches delivered in the session of the provincial Muslim League in which the two communities were painted as two separate entities having no affinity with each other and in which the responsibility for the alleged injustice and inequity to the Musalmans were flung upon the shoulders of Government, fanned and fed the communal bitterness. The preaching of the Moslems that religion was in danger since the assumption of office by the Congress and that the Congress Government was synonymous with Hindu Government greatly excited the Muslim population. The hoisting of the National Flag over the City School in January 1939, was a trouble which the School authorities, aided by the police, could and were able to control, but the leaders of the Muslim League appeared on the scene and interested themselves which led to a serious communal outburst in the town on that day. Feelings were further embittered by the occurrences during the Bakr-id when at a number of places in the district the Hindus surrounded or encircled Muhammadan villages with the object of interfering with the Bakr-id sacrifices. It is true that after the City School National Flag incident and the riot which followed on its heels, a conciliation committee consisting of the Hindus and Muslims was formed, and at its intercession the communal cases were withdrawn. But this did not serve to heal the communal bitterness as the President of the Muslim League, Mr Ashique, refused to allow the Bakr-Id cases, in which the Hindus were accused, to be compromised. Then came the session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Monghyr, where the speeches were not any less communal or provocative than the speeches of the Muslim League session. The Hyderabad Day celebration undoubtedly added to the stock of communal bitterness, but from the reports of the speeches delivered on the day it appears that the tone was mild and subdued.

Immediately before the riot of May, came the 'Bande Mataram' controversy in the zilla school which received support from the Hindu and Muslim guardians. During this very time, a series of meetings were addressed by Ghazi Dharampal who under the garb of religion preached the doctrine and programme of the Muslim League. The Prophet's Birthday, instead of being celebrated as a religious function, was used for making an appeal to the Muslims to join the Muslim League and most of the Muslim houses were on that occasion decorated with the Muslim League flag. In these circumstances only a spark was needed to start a communal conflagration and that spark was provided by the incident of the throwing of a pot of hot meat on the road which accidentally fell upon a Hindu girl.

It has been said that as soon as the riot broke out there was a general organized assault upon the Muslims throughout the length and breadth of the town. This is not correct. Crowds began to collect on both sides, but the first two assaults which came to the notice of the authorities were not upon Muhammadans but upon Hindus. There was an assault upon the son of Surya Prashad Mahajan near Chhata Mosque and upon a Bengali gentleman named Sailendra Banerji. Thereupon the disturbance became general.

The statement criticized the police arrangements to deal with the disturbances and alleges that 'the available force was deputed to such Mohallas exclusively as were inhabited mostly by the Muslims,' while the Hindu Mohallas remained almost without police pickets, the insinuation being that whereas the Musalmans were kept in check, the Hindus were left free to commit depredations, murder and loot. This entirely misrepresents the situation. As soon as the rioting broke out, the Emergency Patrol Scheme which had been prepared some years ago by Mr Morris, when he was Superintendent of Police, was put into force. This scheme provided for concentrating picketing on

roads and cross-roads communicating between the Hindu and Muhammadan Mohallas and at points where previous experience showed that crowds are likely to collect at such points and attack on the another, it is obvious that the first duty of the police was to take measures to prevent such clashes from occurring. The statement of the Muslim League Secretary itself bears out the fact that the police were successful in achieving this object when he states that ‘It is significant to note that the Muslims were not killed or injured in any regular clash or fight between the two communities.’ In fact most of the casualties occurred in stray assaults scattered over a wide area mostly, it is true, in the Hindu Mohallas. Most of the attacks occurred during the first twelve hours of the disturbance on the night of the 6th/7th May 1939. It was impossible for the police to prevent these or to detail forces to picket all the Mohallas in the town, because at the time when the disturbance broke out a considerable a part of the police force had been deputed to keep order in the muffassil police stations in connection with the District Board elections. The small force that remained had, therefore, of necessity to be concentrated at the important points to prevent major clashes from occurring. Moving patrols were, however, established at once and from the morning of the 7th May 1939, when reinforcements began to arrive, the picketing system was rapidly extended to every Mohallas and was completed by the 8th May 1939. The suggestion, therefore, that the police concentrated upon picketing the Muhammadans and left the Hindus free to do as they wished is a gross misrepresentation of facts.

It is alleged that 10 or more Muhammadans were missing after the riots. Only three such cases had been reported to the police and since nothing further has been heard from the relatives, it is inferred that they have returned to their homes.

A complaint is made that the police neglected to search the underground drains for bodies. All the drains were searched by the Gaya Municipality and no traces of dead bodies were found.

It is stated that there was no indiscriminate assault by Muhammadans upon the Hindus. If this is so, it is not obvious how one Hindu was killed and 43 injured during the course of the disturbances.

The statement alleges that on the 6th and 7th May 1939, the police arrested indiscriminately, mostly Muslims. The actual figures of arrest on these days are given below and speak for themselves:

	Hindus	Muhammadans
6th May	7	7
7th May	155	96
8th May	69	13
Total for the riot	338	136

The number of Hindus arrested outnumbered the Muhammadans by two to one. The arrests on the 7th and 8th May 1939, were numerous, because it was essential to arrest at once as many as possible of the known *goondas* of both the communities who were likely to take advantage of the disturbance, and to search for and seize at once any large collection of arms. The searches carried on the 7th May 1939 were for that purpose and several large collections of weapons were actually found. The facts provide the fullest justification for the action taken and should demonstrate beyond doubt that preparations were being made for rioting.

The statement that the houses of Maulavi Muhammad Ishaqu Pleader was raided and that an attempt to arrest him was made is untrue. A crowd of men was found assembled in front of his house in defiance of the curfew orders and orders under section 144 CrPC and they were called upon to disperse. When they failed to do so, they were pushed on to his *verandah*. No police entered his house and no arrests were made at that time of any of his clients or his relations.

The version given in the statement of the incident in which Shah Mustafa Ahmad Sahib was concerned is far from true, and as both the District Magistrate and the Additional Superintendent

of Police were on the spot immediately, first hand evidence of what took place is available. The District Magistrate found a mob at the road crossing about 150 yards from the house of this gentlemen. The mob was dispersed and the District Magistrate learned from enquiry that Shah Mustafa Ahmad had fired his gun to frighten the crowd. On being questioned he denied that he had fired the gun but stated that he had shown his gun to frighten them away. The District Magistrate thought it necessary in the prevailing excitement to impound his gun which was returned to him after a few days. It is not true that the mob was found abusing and threatening the Shah Sahib, nor is it true that the police chased and arrested the few Muhammadans who were standing there. It was a purely Hindu mob.

The statement that cases of assault and loot took place before the very eyes of the police and that they remained inactive is definitely untrue.

The allegation that the police did not assist the Muslim League in escorting Muhammadan homes is baseless. Over 500 persons out of whom a majority were Muhammadans were escorted to their homes by police officers on the 6th May 1939, and the help given by the Police was acknowledged openly by the Muslim League workers before the Commissioner of the Patna Division in the presence of Mr Ashiq Warsi. Where police help was asked for, it was given to rescue parties proceeding in taxis and lorries and the Magistrate also helped in escorting people to their homes.

A complaint is made that there were no proper arrangements for recording information at the police stations as a result of which many Muslims were prevented from lodging information. On the contrary, the Kotwali Police Station was the headquarters of all the officers from the 6th to 10th May 1939. One of the two Superintendents of Police and two Magistrates were always on duty there besides several Sub-Inspectors. The District Magistrate also spent much of his time there and the Deputy Inspector General of Police was also at the Kotwali Police Station during most of the 7th and 8th May 1939. No complaint was received at any time by any of these officers that there was any difficulty in getting information lodged or recorded and the allegation must be regarded as without foundation.

It is alleged that on the 10th May 1939, one Ali Jan was arrested under section 505 IPC for spreading false rumour, while on the 9th May 1939, at Mohalla Teli Bigha a Hindu was not arrested under exactly similar circumstances. The facts are that on the 9th May 1939, one Hindu and one Muhammadan of Mohalla Gayawalbigha lodged false information and both were arrested for spreading false alarm. No arrest was made under section 505. This is not a section under which the police can make arrests without warrant and it is not true that two Muslims aged 65 and 70 were arrested by police party.

It is further alleged that on the 11th May 1939, a consumptive Muhammadan boy of about 18 years of age was arrested on a false allegation made by a Hindu. The youth referred to is one Habib Mian. The facts are that on the 9th May 1939, a Goala lodged information that two Muhammadans had chased him and had entered the house of Habib Mian. On receipt of this information the house was raided by a Magistrate who recovered 3 swords, 2 garases and 8 lathis from the house. Habib Mian was accordingly arrested. As far as medical examination shows, the youth is not suffering from phthisis.

As regards the case of Bhola Ram, no complaint has ever been made to the authorities that he was beaten by a Hindu constable because he had saved the lives of certain Muslims and he was not arrested on this accounts. On the contrary, it is well known that a number of Hindus and Muhammadans gave shelter and help to members of the opposite community. The District Magistrate had a list prepared of all such cases as came to notice and has moved Government to issue letters of thanks to these persons for their public spirited behaviour.

The allegation that on receiving a false alarm of fire in Mohalla Dulhinganj, the Additional Superintendent of the Police ordered the police to find out and arrest all the Muhammadans of that Mohalla is completely untrue.

The statement alleges that the police took no steps to circulate the photos of the dead bodies among the Muhammadans or to exhibit them in the *Kotwali* for information to enable the bodies to be identified. Most of the murder cases have been investigated by Muhammadan Officers. The photos of unidentified bodies were not only shown by these officers to all persons in Gaya Town likely to be interested, but they have been circulated to different police stations to enable the bodies to be identified. All the dead bodies have been identified.

The allegation that gentlemen enrolled as special police constables were deliberately humiliated by being made to march through the prostitutes' quarters is unjustified. Special constables were asked particularly to get the shops opened and to restore confidence and they were directed to move through the most populous parts of the town. The fact that among other places they passed the prostitutes' quarters was purely incidental as big shops lie in the Mohalla where prostitutes inhabit. But the special police was composed both of Hindus and Muslims and it cannot be made a communal grievance.

It is true that an official statement was issued at an early stage of the disturbance that no damage had been done to mosques. At that time no information of such damage had been received and it was considered advisable to issue the statement to prevent alarming rumours from spreading. This statement was not issued to the public but was sent to the Thana Officers to enable them to contradict false rumours. When information was subsequently received the damage had been done to some mosques in out-of-the-way parts of the town and to temples, this fact was also similarly circulated. In the communique issued by the District Magistrate on the 7th May 1939, no mention was made of the burning of a timber yard belonging to a Muhammadan of Gayawal bigha although Mr Whittakar was himself present at the time. This is correct and the reason for this is that Mr Whittakar was not satisfied that the fire was due to incendiarism, but thought that it was accidental.

A complaint is made regarding the arrest of Maulvi M.A. Jalil, Pleader, while serving as a special constable. Information was received from a number of sources that he was inciting the Muhammadans residing in his Mohalla and that he was holding secret meetings in violation of the orders under section 144 CrPC. The District Magistrate, therefore, decided that it was necessary to institute proceedings against him under section 107 CrPC. He was accordingly arrested but was immediately released on bail.

A further complaint is made that the medical aid party of the Muslim League was not allowed to attend the patients in the Sadr Hospital and that arrested persons lodged in the Jail were not allowed to be interviewed. This is correct and was perfectly justified. All arrangements had been made for the treatment and comfort of the patients in the hospital and additional doctors and nurses were summoned from Patna to attend them. The intervention of parties from outside would surely have created confusion. The Hindus too were not allowed to see Hindu patients. If visitors had been allowed, there would have been congestion in the hospital and interference with the work of doctors on duty. A sight of the injuries was likely to fan communal feelings and as among the injured persons there might have been found law-breakers there was danger of evidence being spoilt. For almost similar reasons persons arrested and kept in jail, whether Hindu or Musalmans, were not allowed to be interviewed. On the other hand, Government feel that the fruits and nice food supplied to the undertrial prisoners by Hindus and Musalmans from outside made them think that they were communal martyrs which was not helpful to the cause of communal peace.

The police is also criticized for searching a number of Muslim houses in the neighbourhood of the abandoned house of one Triloki Babu. The house was not abandoned but was in charge of a servant. There was ample justification for the search, because some of the stolen property was actually seen in one of the neighbouring houses by a police officer. When he returned with the search party, most of the property had disappeared but a carpet alleged to belong to Triloki Babu was recovered from one of the Muslim houses in the course of the search. The Superintendent of Police was approached by the General Secretary of the District Muslim League to exempt the houses of Mr Ashiq and Maulavi Muhammad Ghani from search and they were exempted accordingly.

It has been alleged that no arrest or house searches were made in the locality where the dead bodies of Muslims were found.

- (a) One dead body was found in highly decomposed state from a well in a field in Patehganj in the morning of the 10th May 1939. The body was only discovered when bad smell was coming out from the well and the body began to float. One house search was made in this connection.
- (b) The dead body of Hanif Mian was discovered on the 7th May 1939, lying in a deep drain near the house of the Rai Sahib M.N. Bose in Mohalla Pitamaheshwar. Four Hindus were arrested and 25 houses were searched in Nadraganj and Koeri Bigha.
- (c) The dead body of Zafar Mian of Panahmity Akhara was found lying in a field far away from the road side in a Mango garden of Maksudpur Raj. One house was searched and 5 persons were arrested.
- (d) The dead body of Dargahi Mian was found in Gayawalbigha on the 7th May, 1939, and in this connection all the houses in the locality, where the dead body was found, were searched on the same day. They numbered about a dozen. Four Hindus were arrested in this connection.
- (e) On the 7th May 1939, one Khatir Khan belonging to the Watch and Ward Department of the Railway was found dead in the afternoon near the Marshallying Yard. 13 Hindus of Delha were arrested as soon as the case was reported and all the houses of Delha were searched numbering about 25.
- (f) The dead body of the one Shagoor Mian was recovered from a well of Mohalla Patehganj in the morning of the 10th May 1939. In this connection two houses were searched and one Hindu was arrested.
- (g) The dead body of Latifur Rahman was found near the Whitty Park, and 20 houses were promptly searched on both sides of the place of occurrence by the Police.

The rest of the dead bodies of the Muslims were made over to the police by the Hospital authorities on different dates. It is, therefore, absolutely incorrect to say that no arrest or house searches were made in the localities where dead bodies were found. It is also incorrect to say that only Muslim houses were searched and Muslims arrested, maltreated and beaten. From the number of Hindus arrested it is clear that more Hindu houses were searched than Muhammadan, and if the police were strict with the Muslims they were equally strict with the Hindus. It has been further alleged that the Hindu constables remained silent spectators when Muslim houses were looted. There seems to be no foundation for the allegation. Hindu and Muslim constables were dressed alike and it was not possible for anyone to say whether a constable was a Hindu or a Muslim.

Another allegation made is that though the Muslims suffered most on the night of the 6th and the 7th May 1939, the notification entitling persons who had suffered loss from the communal

riots to recover compensation from their aggressors was enforced from the 8th May 1939. It was not possible for Government to issue notification earlier. The riot began on the night of the 6th May but the full extent of the disturbances was only known to Government on the 7th. It was, therefore, not possible to make the notification applicable earlier than from the 8th May.

But the chief allegation of the Muslim League seems to be that all these troubles have occurred because the Superintendent of Police and specially the District Magistrate happened to be Hindus. The allegation has absolutely no foundation. As it has been pointed out, communal trouble had been brewing in Gaya town and in the Mufassil for several months past, even when there was a European, namely, Mr Whittaker, acting as District Magistrate. Between the months of January and February 1939, communal troubles had occurred at 9 places. On the 6th May, when the riots broke out in the Gaya town the Hindu District Magistrate had just taken charge on that very day, and during the first two days of the riots, Mr Whittaker, himself, who continued to work even after he had been relieved, advised and assisted the District Magistrate in controlling the situation. As a matter of fact the District Magistrate of Gaya, Rai Bahadur Bishundeo Narain Singh, fought the riots bravely taking personal risks at times and Government feel that instead of being condemned he deserves to be thanked both by the Government and by the public.

III. Allegations Made by the General Secretary, District Muslim League, Gaya:

1. Hindu-Muslim tension in Gaya may be traced to the organizing of 'Hyderabad Day' and various provocative anti-Moslem slogans used in connection with the celebration. Feelings between the two communities were alienated and the outburst came with the hoisting of the Congress flag in the City school on the 26th January 1939.—'The Independence Day'. The leaders of both the communities soon put their heads together and a compromise was arrived at with the result that all the pending cases were withdrawn in the hope that the two communities would live in peace and amity in future, but the hope was soon to be falsified. The boys of Gaya Zilla School began to agitate and insist on singing 'Bande Mataram'. They made an appeal to their parents and the Hindu public in general to help them in their cause, the ground was thus thoroughly prepared for general conflagration and the misguided section of the Hindus waited for an opportune moment.

2. It so happened that within a few hours of Mr Whittaker's making over charge to Mr B.N. Singh, the present District Magistrate, a pot of hot meat thrown on the road unintentionally and without any motive of doing any injury to any person, due to a quarrel between a Moslem couple, fell upon a small Hindu girl residing in the adjacent house. No fight or even a scuffle took place there, yet it proved to be a signal for the Hindus to attack the Moslems on the pretext that a Mussalman had thrown beef on a Hindu. Immediately a general assault with sharp and deadly weapons started indiscriminately on the Moslems throughout the length and breadth of the town and before the Moslems could realize the seriousness of the danger a good number of them were either killed or severely assaulted.

3. Total casualties among the Moslems are as follows:

(a) Deaths	13
(b) Injured	90
(c) Shops looted	15 (information incomplete)
(d) Mosques damaged or desecrated	3
(e) Persons missing	10 (incomplete)

4. From the afternoon of the 6th May till the evening of the 7th May not less than 9 Moslems were done to death, about 60 injured more or less seriously and more than a dozen of their shops looted and some of them even burnt. It is significant to note that the Moslems were not killed or

injured in any regular clash or fight between the two communities. The Hindus fell upon, murdered and assaulted the Moslems wherever they found them unprotected as is evident from the fact that among those killed or injured are women, children of tender age, some street beggars and even insane persons. On the other hand no such case of sudden and indiscriminate assault on Hindus in Moslem Mohallas is reported. A timber yard of considerable value belonging to a Moslem of Gayawalbigha was reduced to ashes on the night of the 6th May and a young Moslem named Darghani Mian who rushed to extinguish the fire was brutally murdered. Muezzin of a Mosque was murdered at about 8 p.m. on the 6th May close to the Kotwali. The shop of Rafique Pahalwan, a shoe merchant, was looted not far off from police station and another shop of Wazir Mian, a wholesale dealer, was looted within the distance of 300 yards from the police station. Almost all the Moslem shops situated in Hindu Mohallas were looted while those of Hindus in Moslem Mohallas remained safe although.

5. Within half an hour of the outbreak of the riot almost all the available force was deputed to such Mohallas exclusively as are inhabited mostly by Moslems while till morning of the 8th May there was inadequate police force or the/picket in Mohallas which have predominantly Hindu population.

6. Almost all the cases of death and serious injury to Moslems are reported from Hindu Mohallas which remained almost without police pickets. The Hindus of these Mohallas were free and did whatever they liked as is borne out by the number of casualties on the 6th, 7th and 8th of May.

7. On the 6th and 7th May, the police arrested indiscriminately, mostly Moslems. Their houses were forcibly broken open and innocent Moslems sitting in private apartments and hotels were arrested, maltreated and beaten. The hotel-keepers were also arrested in Mohallas Chhata Masjid, Ghasiartoki with result that many Moslems had to go without food in those quarters. The police entered the house of M. Ishaqtue, Pleader, who had returned from Calcutta the same day and was lying ill, and wanted to arrest him and his clerk. One of his rooms was forcibly opened and some of his Muslim clients and relatives who had come to see him were arrested. Most of the dead bodies of the Moslems were brought to the thana by the police who certainly knew the places from where they have picked up those dead bodies but no arrest or house search of the Hindus of those localities was made. Almost all the murders and assaults on Moslems occurred in the Hindu Mohallas where there was insufficient or no police guard or patrol. In the morning of the 8th the District Magistrate observed at the thana that everything was alright and the town was normal, but that very morning a Moslem who had gone to purchase betel in Pan-dariba, not very far from *Kotwali*, was brutally assaulted and this matter had been reported to the authorities.

8. In Moslem quarters the police relentlessly made lathi charges on the Moslems and some of the Hindu constables were heard saying '*Woh Zamana Gaya*' (those days are gone). On the 7th May a mob proceeded to the house of the Shah Mustafa Ahmad Saheb, a respectable Rais of the town. He took out his unloaded gun and showed it to the militant mob only to frighten them away, just then the District Magistrate accompanied by a Hindu Sub-Inspector and police arrived there and seized the gun of Shah Mustafa Ahmad saying that he had made a mistake in showing it to the mob. But the police did not arrest any member of the said mob who were all armed with deadly weapons and abusing Shah Saheb and instead, chased and arrested the few Moslems who were standing on the other side calling '*Khara rah re Musalmanwa teriman ki aisi taisi.*'

9. Many cases of assault and loot took place in front of the eyes of the police but the Hindu constables remained aloof as silent spectators. On the 6th, 7th and the 8th and subsequent days the Moslem League took up the work of rescuing the Moslem families from dangerous Hindu Mohallas such as New Godown, Pahsi, Tootbari, Narain Chauan, etc. but the rescue party of the League was not given aid by the police inspite of request made by the General Secretary. The

rescue party had to patrol the whole town and did rescue over 500 Moslems without any police help and at the risk of its own safety.

10. The tactics adopted by the police kept back many of the Moslems from lodging information of occurrences or apprehensions. There was no proper arrangement at the police station to record information of occurrences with the result that many Moslems who went to lodge information were referred to this or to that officer and had in the end to come back disappointed without lodging any information. Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad, Assistant Secretary, Town Muslim League who was at the police station to render help to such informants, was asked by Mr Ojha, ICP to get out of the police station.

11. On the 10th May one Ali Jan of Gayawalbiga went of lodge information regarding the throwing of stones by the Hindus. He was arrested under section 505 IPC but on 7th May, a Hindu of Mohalla Telibigha was not arrested though his information was found to be false and instead two old Moslems aged 60, 70 one of whom was blind were arrested.

12. On the 12th May on a false allegation by a Hindu, the police forcibly entered the house of a Muslim in Mohalla Murarpur and arrested a Moslem boy aged about 18 years who had been suffering from phthisis for the last two years and was the only male occupant of the house at the time of the arrest and he was found in Jail by Dr Rajindra Prasad and Mr Aziz on the 14th May when they visited the Jail. A Hindu named Bhola Ram complained to them that he was assaulted by a Hindu constable because he had saved the lives of some Moslems and he was arrested for this offence. A false alarm of fire was raised on night by the Hindus in Dulhingunj. The Additional Superintendent of Police arrived with force and water lorry. The house of Gyani Pande was pointed out as the one which was put to fire. Yet all that was found was a rag soaked in water. The Additional Superintendent of Police ordered the police to find out and arrest the Moslems in that Mohalla but the Moslem houses were found locked. Only an old Moslem women responded to the call of the police in one of the houses. No action was taken against the Hindus for raising this false alarm and none was arrested for creating a false panic. Dead bodies of the Moslems and injured Moslems in precarious condition were recovered from Hindu Mohallas up till the 8th May. This clearly shows the lack of inefficiency of police patrol or pickets in those localities. Some Moslems are reported to be missing still. No serious effort has been made by the police to scour the underground drains in Hindu Mohallas to find out the dead bodies if any.

13. The police took photos of the dead bodies of the Moslems but did not either give their copies to the Moslems or hand over them to the *Kotwali* for identification. Even the names and addresses of the dead Moslems were not disclosed with the result that information could not be lodged and the Moslems remained in the dark regarding the fate of their relatives.

14. Almost all the respectable persons of the town were made SPC under section 17 of the Police Act on the 7th May. One day they were made to parade the Mohalla inhabited by public women, under the command of a police officer in the scorching heat of the sun so much so that M. Shams-uz-Zuha, pleader, who had recently recovered from a long illness, fell ill again. This was done surely to humiliate and dishonour them.

15. A few days after the riots a notice was circulated by the police that no mosque was either demolished or damaged, whereas in fact one mosque in Deoghar near Vishnupad and two other mosques in Lekhanpur and Bawan Sirhi were seriously damaged. These mosques were later on inspected by Messrs Narainjee, Ahmad Habib of the Provincial Congress Committee and Shah Mubiuddin Ahmad of Gaya Town Congress Committee.

16. In the communiqué issued by the District Magistrate on the 7th May mention was made of the attempt by the Moslems to burn Marwari Shop but curiously enough no mention was made in this or in subsequent communiqué of the burning of the timber yard of a Moslem of Gayawalbiga

or the looting of the shops of Wazir Ali, Rafique and others. At least the fire to the timber yard of Ghulam Rasul was seen by the District Magistrate himself and Mr Macdonald on the night of the 6th before issuing the communiqué.

17. The number of Moslems killed and injured and the heavy financial loss suffered by them due to the burning and looting of their immovable shops should have convinced the District Magistrate that the Moslems could not have been the aggressors. M.M.A. Jalil, Pleader, who resides in a Moslem Mohalla where no occurrence had taken place and who had been made SPC was arrested under section 107 SPC. A good number of the Moslems were arrested but the District Magistrate did not allow the General Secretary of the Provincial Moslem League to visit them in Jail or Hospital to enquire into their grievances and to console them. Again the General Secretary of the Moslem League or the Medical Aid Party of the League was not allowed to visit the hospital and attend to the Moslem patients there. Such permissions were freely given by Mr Whittaker to the Moslem League during the last January riots.

18. On a complaint of theft by Triloki Babu, an inhabitant of Mohalla Murarpore who had left his house about three months back, the police searched about 10 houses of the Moslems in that Mohalla although nothing incriminating was discovered from the houses searched. This causes great harassment and inconvenience to the Moslems of that Mohalla. The SP was approached by the District General Secretary of the League on the first day of the search and he promised to direct the police not to make indiscriminate searches but still the next day searches were conducted with show of force.

19. The losses suffered by the Moslems due to the burning and looting of the shops were great on the 6th but curiously enough the town was declared disturbed area on the 8th. This means a denial of compensation to the Moslems in majority of the cases.

20. These are some out of many and innumerable grievances of the Moslems of Gaya which they have against the police and the magistracy but at the same time they want to make it clear that they have no grievance against the SDO Sadr whose attitude on this occasion was as good as during the previous riot in January last.

21. The Moslems of Gaya demand an independent and impartial enquiry into the conduct and behaviour of the authorities responsible for causing such hardships and oppressions on Moslems. They hope and trust that the Government would meet their just and legitimate demands.

93. Bengal Hindu Sabha

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 19 May 1939.

19 May 1939

The Bengal Hindus have taken up the challenge which Mr Abul Kaseem and Fazl-ul-Huq and his henchmen had thrown out to them. Thirty thousand citizens, among whom were leaders of every shade of public opinion, gathered on Thursday evening at the Shraddhananda Park, resolved unanimously 'to resist by all legitimate means the Calcutta Municipal Act (Amendment) Bill and all other reactionary measures, legislative and administrative, calculated to deprive the Hindus of their rights and privileges'. The meeting recorded 'its emphatic opinion that the Bill is an unwarranted infringement on the just rights of the Hindus who are the majority community in Calcutta, in the civil administration of the city of Calcutta and that it should on no account be passed into law.'

The meeting called upon the citizens of Calcutta to sign the statement of protest against the Bill and resolved that at least one lakh of such signatures be secured as an expression of the intensity of public opinion against the measure.

The shadow of an evil day, said Dr Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, had fallen over the province. If the Bengali Hindus wanted to fight for their just and legitimate rights which today had been threatened by the provisions of the Calcutta Municipal Act (Amendment) Bill they must, as sons of Mother Bengal, stand together ready to undergo utmost sufferings in defence of their cherished rights and privileges. But if they failed to do so their existence itself would be threatened.

94. 'Medieval Mentality': On the Views of V.D. Savarkar

Editorial, *Tribune*, 7 June 1939.

7 June 1939

Mr V.D. Savarkar is an essentially modern man and we confess we did not expect him to exhibit the medieval mentality that he did exhibit in his speech at the Mahakoshal Provincial Hindu Conference on Sunday night. There was much in the speech with which no right-thinking person can have any quarrel. Such, for instance, was his observation that nationalism was a virtue when it was defensive, and that it was a positive vice when it was aggressive, and that the same was the case with communalism. The havoc which aggressive nationalism has done in some western countries as well as in one great eastern country is so well known that it is hardly necessary to refer to it at any length. As for aggressive communalism, every page of India's contemporary history is replete with instances of the immense mischief that it has done and is doing both to the country as a whole and to all its component units.

When, however, Mr Savarkar proceeded from this perfectly safe and wholly unassailable proposition to the declaration that 'the Hindus were out to fight' and that 'they alone had the right to rule over India' he not only flatly contradicted himself, but took up a position which every true nationalist in India must fight tooth and nail. To say that the Hindus alone have the right to rule over India is not defensive communalism, but aggressive communalism of the worst character, and while we can understand it as a reaction produced in a sensitive Hindu mind by aggressive Muslim communalism, we can no more sympathize with or accept it on that account than we can sympathize with or accept aggressive Muslim communalism itself.

Mr Savarkar hoped that like the German, American and French nations the 28 crores of Hindus would have a Hindu nation in Hindustan with Vedic Dharma. He could not have perpetrated a worse or more astounding fallacy. Neither Germany, nor France nor America is the name of a religion or a religious community. In every case it is the name of a country and a nation. In America religion has not the remotest connection with politics. In France no religion is recognized by the State. In Germany itself, which has so much to answer for at the bar of history, and which by its persecution of the Jews has recently earned the execration of civilized humanity, the constitution originally provided for entire liberty of conscience and there was no such thing as a State church. Since 1934 a retrograde tendency has been visible and during the last two years a resolute attempt has been made to establish a German National Church. But with all that the State in Germany as in France and America is a secular institution. America is a country of many religions but no American ever thinks of himself politically in terms of his religion. France though a preponderatingly Catholic country, has about a million Protestants, but French Protestants are as much a part of the French nation as the Catholics, in spite of the bitter memories of religious persecution in the country in the not very remote past. In Nazi Germany the average citizen does think in terms of his race, but even he does not think in terms of his religion. In India the overwhelming majority of Muslims and Christians belong to the same racial stock as the Hindus, and on the German analogy they are as much Indians or Hindustanis as the Hindus themselves.

Even the case of Germany, therefore, does not lend any support to Mr Savarkar's view that the twenty-eight crores of Hindus should form a Hindu nation.

The only possible nation in India is an Indian nation just as the only nation in Germany France or the United states is the German, the French or the American nations. Of this Indian nation Muslims and Christians are and must for all time be as much an integral part as the twenty-eight crores of Hindus. Mr Savarkar's claim that the twenty-eight crores of Hindus have 'the right to rule over India' is just as inadmissible as the claim of Mr Fazl-ul-Huq and his friends that the seven or eight crores of Muslims have the right to rule over it. Where the conception of the State is secular and not theoretic, as it is in all modern countries, a religious majority has no more the right to impose its yoke on a religious minority than a religious minority has the right to impose its yoke on the majority. Where the form of government is democratic the rule must, indeed, be the rule of a majority, but it must be a non-religious, non-communal and changeable majority, and every member of every religious minority must have the inherent right to become a part of this majority either by changing his own political convictions or by converting the majority to his view. On any other basis members of all religious minorities would, for all time, be doomed to political subjection and suppression, and what is called 'the government of the people by the people for the people' would perish from the earth and its place would be taken by the rule of a despotic and unchangeable, even if it is in some cases, benevolent majority. For the minorities this would be a complete negation of freedom and would amount to the establishment of conditions hardly distinguishable from slavery. Mr Savarkar claimed to speak for the Hindus. He has only to make an attempt to find out that the overwhelming majority of his co-religionists have no sympathy with his view. The very success of the Congress both at the last Central Assembly elections and at the last general elections for the provinces is a conclusive proof of the fact.

95. On Federation

Editorial, *Leader*, 26 June 1939.

26 June 1939

Without being necessarily in agreement with everything that Mr Moonje has said on the question of Federation, we do feel that there is some ground for the note of warning that he has sounded. Those who have been closely following the course of Muslim politics under the shrewd and experienced leadership of Mr Jinnah during the last few years, will not find it easy to differ from Dr Moonje when he says that while making a show of opposition to Federation the Muslim League is playing a very realistic and intelligent game, viz., manoeuvring to secure for the Muslims equal representation with the Hindus in the Federal Legislature. Implacable opposition to Federation at this stage may, therefore, be fraught with serious consequences to the interests of the majority community and the progress of the country. And it will be a serious blunder on the part of the princes, as on that of the Congress, to ignore this menace of a triumph of the communal forces. It is not easy to conceive that the existence of this danger could have completely escaped the notice of the Congress leaders. What is more likely, its old and impracticable attitude of uncompromising opposition to anything short of complete independence has landed the Congress on the horns of a dilemma. Those who have carefully followed the trend of Congress politics, particularly as reflected in the growing spirit of cooperation between the Gandhian and the Bose groups inside the Congress, will find it a bit difficult to resist the conclusion that Dr Moonje has reached, viz., that it is 'the opposition resulting from his own policy of boycott' and 'the attitude of his more extreme lieutenants that are preventing Mahatma Gandhi from coming out with his own mind, in

order to give a clear lead to the country, which I feel sure, will never be against Federation.' It is, therefore, not an unnecessary warning that Dr Moonje has sought to convey to the princes and the Congress. The federal scheme is no doubt full of grave defects and serious shortcomings, but once the danger of a triumph of communalism is out of the way, the increasing force of public opinion should be a sufficient guarantee that it will not long be allowed to remain the last word on constitution-making in India. As Dr Moonje has sensibly put it, 'Let us get into the house and then start improving and expounding it.'

96. A 'Hindu' Meet

Tribune, 1 July 1939.

Lahore
30 June 1939

'We want nationalism as the basis of Government in all spheres—in the Local Self-Government and in the Provincial Government. Once you introduce separate electorates in the Local Self-Government, it is bound to vitiate the whole body-politic,' declared Raja Narendra Nath, while presiding over representatives' meeting of the Hindus held in the Lajpit Rai Hall this afternoon.

The meeting had been convened to protest against the proposal to give representation to the Harijans on the basis of separate electorate in the proposed Corporation for the city of Lahore. A large number of citizens, representing various organizations, attended the meeting.

Dr Gopi Chand, who represents the city of Lahore in the Assembly, explained the object of the meeting and referred to the history of the Communal Award and how Mahatma Gandhi succeeded in undoing the attempt to divide the Hindus. He pointed out how a similar attempt in Bengal had been thwarted recently due to the agitation among the people and the intervention of the Hindu Ministers who threatened to resign.

Raja Narendra Nath, in the course of his opening remarks, referring to the historic fast of Mahatma Gandhi, pointed out how the Punjab Hindus readily agreed to give 8 seats to the Scheduled Castes in the Provincial Legislature even though originally no seat had been provided. That was agreed to even without any demand on the part of the Scheduled Castes.

Nationalism

Raja Narendra Nath declared:

'We want nationalism as the basis of Government in all spheres—in the Local Self-Government and in the Provincial Government. If once you introduce separate electorates in the Local Self-Government it is bound to affect the whole body-politic.'

Raja Sahib condemned the system of separate electorate as an evil which should be resisted by all right thinking persons and by all those who had the country's interest at heart. Separate electorates retard the progress of the country in regard to the achievement of its goal and should never be supported by anyone.

There was no reason why such a vicious system should be foisted upon them even if some people expressed their desire to have it. Should anyone force wine upon a people simply because some persons who were addicted to it wanted it? Again, he asked if any one would agree to the suggestion that Shias should be given representation on the basis of separate electorate.

Cry in Wilderness

Raja Sahib expressed the view that they should launch a strong agitation right from now against the proposal to divide Hindus so that the proposal might not be incorporated in the Corporation

Bill. The need to start the agitation just now was great because, as it had happened previously, the Government might refuse to agree to make any change in the Corporation Bill if it came from the Opposition Benches.

That was one of the reasons, said Raja Sahib, why he thought it better to resign and come out of the Assembly. He had begun to feel that his voice was a cry in the wilderness and so he thought that he would be able to serve the cause and his people if he were out of it. He was there to give whatever little help or advice he could offer.

Rai Bahadur Lala Ram Saran Das moved the following resolution:

This meeting of the Hindu citizens of Lahore strongly protests against any attempt to introduce separate electorate for Scheduled Castes in the proposed Municipal Corporation of Lahore and views it as a mischievous move to vivisect the Hindu Community and to weaken the influence and strength of the Hindus. This proposal is a gross violation of the policy and decision underlying the Poona Pact and is highly detrimental to the growth of the sense of civic responsibility and national solidarity.

This meeting further warns the Government that this reactionary proposal will be vigorously resisted by the Hindu community throughout the province with all the force at its command.

Dangerous

Shri Gulshan Rai, in seconding the resolution characterized the move to divide Hindus as 'mischievous and dangerous.' He was sorry to say that the system of separate electorate was being encouraged by a Government whose Chief had often declared that his Government was not opposed to the system of joint electorates. That was the ground on which the Unity Conference had been convened and prominent leaders like Raja Sahib and Mr Gopi Chand had agreed to join it.

97. UP Premier's Failure to Protect Hindus: Mahasabha's Protest

Leader, 9 July 1939.

In a letter addressed to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, the honorary secretary, Hindu Mahasabha, wrote:

The Hindu Mahasabha strongly condemns and protests against the notice under section 144, CrPC, served on our chief organizer Pandit Chandra Gupta Vedalankar by the district magistrate of Budaun, Mr Abdul Rauf, prohibiting Pandit Chandra Gupta from making any speech for a period of one month.

The Hindu Mahasabha further condemns and protests against the tone and spirit of your letter to the Budaun Congress workers, Mr Raghuvir Sahai, wherein you have conveyed threats to Budaun Hindu Sabha workers with dire consequences if they continue any agitation against your Ministry by curtailing their civil liberties. This threat, the Hindu Mahasabha understands, has been conveyed because the Hindus of Budaun, in a recent meeting under the auspices of the local Hindu Sabha passed a resolution of no confidence in your Ministry and against you personally because it is your constituency, for your failure to protect the Hindus against Muslim aggression in UP.

98. V.D. Savarkar to Ganpat Rai, 11 July 1939

Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML.

Mahashaya,

Your letter dated 6-7-39 to hand. You know from newspapers that I am almost constantly going on tours far and wide in different provinces and almost all districts in Maharashtra, besides attending

to the Hindu Mahasabha work. The Nizam Civil Resistance Movement has cost the Hindu Mahasabha some Rs 75,000 in cash. All this fund has to be raised and thousands of volunteers whose number now has reached to 4,000 approximately has taxed all my time and energy and now that the movement is thickening all the more and new front of Hindu Mahasabha activity are opening in Madras and in London, the pressure of the work is bound to grow heavier and intenser. Interviews with leaders from the Nizam State and the spasmodic and endless talks about compromise to be conducted require me from time to time to hurry back to Bombay. I have to preside over a conference at Poona at the end of this month where all the Maharashtra, Berar and CP leaders are to assemble. Then in all probability I shall have to go to Bengal to preside over the Hindu rally to usher in United Hindu Bengal Party and in the first week of September I have to preside over the UP Hindu Conference. At the end of September, the Madras Hindu Conference is almost sure to take place and in and between all this a heap of correspondence lying in arrears is to be disposed of with only one single typist at my disposal. How do you expect me under these circumstances to tour Punjab and Delhi? From every quarter letters pour in 'if you want our Province or city to contribute any funds of volunteers you must personally visit this place.' That is, you will admit an impossible condition. I cannot be at two places simultaneously at one and the same hour. I feel grateful for the public trust and kindness which makes them depend on a single individual. But I want to impress all our friends and workers in all Provinces that no one man and least of all my humble-self can meet the emergency unless and until the Hindu as a people rise equal to the occasion and learn to depend upon themselves and do their bit each on his own initiative and came forward to go to the front in this *Dharma Yuddha* without waiting for someone else to tell him to do so.

(2) The use of tours and propaganda I realize fully well. But under these circumstances every province should take care of its own. If in Punjab and Delhi no one stirs out and the same case happens in all Provinces what am I alone to do? Therefore, I request you and Sjt Indraprakashji as well that you should personally see some persons whether they are willing to come forward to go to the front.

(b) Please not to leave a single leader who is a staunch Hindu Sabhaite or Hindu Sanghatanist, whether as a Sanatanist or otherwise, whom you know of in Delhi and Punjab. There is an urgent necessity now of having some great leader to go to the front from Punjab and Delhi. Therefore, let us at least have the satisfaction of having exhausted all efforts, so that no one may say afterwards that he was not called upon and therefore he did not go to the front. (c) Please contact members of the Provincial Committees of Delhi and Punjab Province whom you definitely request through letters if you cannot see them personally and whether at least a couple of leaders of note are willing to go to the front under the Hindu Mahasabha flag. (d) If, by 1st of August when I receive this report from you, I find anyone willing to go I shall immediately write to him formally and keep a big Jatha ready in Maharashtra to be led by him. (e) Secondly, you should ask of them to undertake at least a tour in Punjab, Multan and Delhi province on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha and try to raise funds and find volunteers. (f) It was encouraging to read in newspapers that in Amritsar, Mahashaya Ratanchand and some other leaders have definitely taken sides and joined Hindu Mahasabha. You should kindly write to them and put a straight question if someone of the noted leaders amongst them is willing to go to the front or at least go on a private or public tour throughout Punjab to raise funds. (g) I also request you directly but confidentially whether you yourself will find it possible to go to the front. If it is possible for you then it will doubtless add much to the prestige of the Hindu Mahasabha which you have so devotedly served for such a long time and will also strengthen your position as a leader of the Hindus in the public eyes. The same way I should like to know from Sjt Indraprakashji to whom I am sending a copy of this letter, whether he is willing to go to the front.

(3) The time has come that the Hindu Sabhas, provincial or local, should send but all their offices to fight out this *Dharma Yuddha* which has so far been fought out with admirable courage, bravery and unexpected determination by the Hindu Mahasabhaites as well as of course our Arya Samaj brethren. We have to hold on for some four months longer and we are sure to record a notable success. I may assure the Hindu Mahasabha is not yet exhausted. But it will add grandeur to the movement if leaders from other provinces and large numbers as well pour in at this critical time. Please not to leave a single stone unturned, to find out some big leaders or at any rate devoted workers to go to the front from Punjab and Delhi. Gokul Chand Narang¹ should be privately and personally sounded by you first of all. If he is willing then alone there is any grace in requesting him definitely by the president of the Hindu Mahasabha. Our revered Bhaiji is an exception and he should not be worried on any account. He has done his duty more than backsliders have any right to expect from him. But if our influential and trusted leader Sjt Narang steps in, it will give an unexpected lift to the cause of Hindu Mahasabha. So please see him personally and immediately and on my behalf ask his mind in a frank and friendly way.

I hope you will pay attention to every detail in this letter and reply seriously by the 1st of August definitely.

¹ Dr Gokul Chand Narang (1878–1969); born in November 1878 in the village Baddoke Gosain in Gujranwala district (now in Pakistan); son of Lala Mul Raj, a village-banker of middle-class status, and of Ganga Devi; first joined village Gurdwara, read Gurmukhi and some portions of the *Granth Sahib*, and later at the village primary school he studied Urdu and Persian; finished Intermediate in 1898, and B.A. in 1900, from DAV College, Lahore; M.A. in English from Punjab University and another M.A. from the Calcutta University; he went to England for his Ph.D. at Oxford, but was not awarded the degree, though he got it from Switzerland in 1910; Lecturer in the DAV College, Lahore, for about six years; associated with Arya Samaj; Narang's Work for the Arya Samaj in the social and educational field led him inevitably to political activity from 1917; in 1919 he condemned the Amritsar massacre as a 'slaughter'; during the Martial Law in the Punjab he was arrested; in 1920 he was elected to the Punjab Legislative Council, and retained his seat till 1946; Narang was a Govt supporter; visualized Swaraj as the final and main goal of Indians, but regarded the grant of Dominion Status on the model of Canada and Australia as the first step; appointed Minister of Local Self-Government and Industries in 1930; knighthood was conferred on him in 1934; Director of the Head Board of the Punjab National Bank, and the founder of the Narang Bank of India and the Saraswati Insurance Ltd; editor of the *Arya Messenger*, Lahore, and contributed numerous articles to the *Arya Gazettee*, *The Tribune* and the *Indian Mirror*; publications *Aurat-ki-tarbayat* (Urdu), *Swami Dayanand*, the *Message of the Vedas*; leader of Hindu Mahasabha in Punjab, never joined Congress, Vice-President of All India Hindu Mahasabha, President, Punjab Hindu Mahasabha for many years; after 1947, vehemently criticized the Congress for neglecting the rights of Hindus and appeasing the Muslims.

99. The Problem of Communal Unity: Raja Narendra Nath¹

Tribune, 4 August 1939.

Srinagar
2 August 1939

'Every effort on the part of the Congress for the last fifty-five years to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity in India by bringing the different communities on a common political platform has failed. On the contrary, every step taken towards political advancement has aggravated the situation and brought about more discord and disharmony amongst Hindus and Muslims in the country,' observed Diwan Bahadur Raja Narendra Nath while addressing a crowded gathering of Kashmiri Hindus in Srinagar.

Raja Narendra Nath declared that he was a nationalist and a supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity and he wanted that the nation should be built up on proper lines. Tracing the history of communalism in India from 1885 down to the present day, Raja Sahib said that separate electorates

always stood in the way of the formation of political parties in the country. Representation in Services, etc. was fixed on communal basis and the desired unity could not be achieved.

More Seats to Muslims

He continued, 'The result of the last Round Table Conference was the grant of more seats to Muslims not only in the Centre but in Muslim minority provinces also. Subsequently the question of separate electorates for the scheduled castes also cropped up which was, however, solved, for the time being, by Mahatma Gandhi undertaking to fast unto death. But now a section of the Harijans has begun to demand separate electorates in Municipal corporations.'

Alluding to Provincial Autonomy and the work of the Congress and other ministries, Raja Sahib said, 'The claim of the Congress to be a nationalist body is justified. But I am surprised at a recent statement of Sir Abdullah Haroon wherein he says that Muslim rights are being massacred in eight Congress Provinces. But who does not know that raids, dacoities and kidnappings in the North Western Frontier Province are on the increase while the Hindu minority in the Punjab is groaning under many a hardship?'

He added, 'The Congress rejected the Government of India Act of 1935 and instead wanted the formation of a Constituent Assembly. But as soon as this proposal was made, Indian Muslims demanded that they should have representation on it on a communal basis by separate electorates. Thus this question of the formation of Constituent Assembly has fallen into the background. Regarding an All India Federation, the Muslims want the country to be divided into two parts and it is to be seen how far this scheme will be put into practice. Mahatma Gandhi holds that without Hindu-Muslim unity India's independence is impossible, but when the methods followed by the Congress to bring about unity have proved ineffective in British India, how can unity and responsible self-government in Indian states be achieved?'

Kashmir and Hyderabad

Referring to the movement for the establishment of responsible self-government in States, the speaker said that the powers enjoyed by the Kashmir Assembly were so wide that an example of the like was not to be found in any of the Punjab States. The Muslim majority in Kashmir decidedly enjoyed far greater privileges in all walks of life under a Hindu Maharaja than the Hindu majority of Hyderabad according to the recently announced reforms for the latter State. Raja Sahib observed that if in India *Purna Swaraj* was not an accomplished fact, how could responsible self-government be achieved in Kashmir alone? The idea cherished in certain quarters that a crisis in international situation might help India to achieve *Purna Swaraj* was strongly opposed by the speaker who looked upon it as a gross violation of the principles of *Ahimsa* and Satyagraha involving *Himsa* in thought, word and deed.

Pakistan Scheme

He further added that when according to the verdict of Mahatma, Indian independence was impossible without Hindu-Muslim unity, how on earth could responsible self-government be achieved in Kashmir where Hindu-Muslim relations were more strained than anywhere else in British India or other Indian States? He observed that the scheme of Pakistan and Dr Latif's scheme of cultural zones could not be ignored, especially when Kashmir fell within the purview of those schemes. The scheme of Pakistan or of cultural ones was based on the idea of migration. Hindu minority in Jammu and Kashmir State which is nearly eight lakhs in population should like to know to which areas, whose climate is congenial to them, they would have to migrate. He further said that strong provincial exclusiveness was manifesting itself in all parts of the country.

Provinces might be unwilling to allow immigrants from neighbouring tracts to settle in their areas. The repatriation of Indians on which the Ceylonese Government insisted was cited as an example in point.... He said that responsible self-government in Kashmir was sought under the aegis of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur, 'but until it has definitely known whether the Maharaja of Kashmir would join the Federation or not and if so under what conditions, it was futile to talk of responsible self-government in the State.'

¹ Raja Narendra Nath Das (1864–1945); born on 8 December 1864 in Chuna Mandi at Lahore; son of Diwan Baij Nath, an Extra Assistant Commissioner at Lahore; early education at home by a tutor, in 1880 appeared in Entrance examination at Calcutta, in 1883 appeared in the First Art examination, securing the first position at Lahore, and awarded a merit scholarship for two years; M.A. in 1886 with Philosophy, Science and Persian as his subjects; he translated J.S. Mill's *Liberty* into Urdu in 1887; appointed Assistant Commissioner at Gurdaspur as a probationer for two years; worked as a District Judge at various places in Punjab; Deputy Commissioner of Montgomery, 1895; got the title of Diwan Bahadur in 1908; officiate Commissioner, Lahore Division, 1911; he represented the Land Holders' Constituency and got elected, unopposed, to the Punjab Legislative Council in 1921 and he successfully represented the Constituency up to 1937; presided over the All India Hindu Mahasabha Conference in 1927; remained President of the Punjab Provincial Hindu Sabha for many years; only delegate from Punjab who attended the Round Table Conference, 1930–31; he appreciated the British form of Govt and advocated complete freedom for India; member of the Indian Statutory Provincial Committee; cooperated with the Simon Commission as a member of the Provincial Committee; advocated widow marriage and removal of untouchability; he wrote a book entitled *Sir Stafford Cripps and Akhand Hindustan*; he stood for the Hindu Cause and worked for the Hindu Mahasabha up to the end of his life.

100. Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha: Sarat Chandra Bose to Narendra Nath Das, 11 August 1939

AICC Papers, File No. PL-90/1939, NMML.

A few days ago I learnt from the papers that you had been elected vice-president of the Hindu Sabha (Bengal). It struck me at once that your association with the Hindu Mahasabha as vice-president and as such a member of its executive is not compatible with your position as a member of the Congress party in the Bengal Assembly and as member of the Assembly returned on Congress ticket. The Working Committee, at its sitting held last December, adopted a resolution declaring the Hindu Mahasabha as a communal organization. This resolution is set forth below:

'Resolved that for the purposes of Article V(C) the following organizations are declared as communal organizations:

The Hindu Mahasabha,

The Muslim League.

Article V (C) reads:

No person who is a member of any elected Congress Committee shall be a member of any similar Committee of a communal organization, the object or programme of which involves political activities which are in the opinion of the Working Committee, anti-national and in conflict with those of the Congress.¹

This, to my mind, makes it clear that an elected member of any Congress organization is not entitled to retain his association with any of these communal organizations as an elected office-bearer.

I hope you will give serious thought to this point and let me have a reply at a very early date.

¹ See also, *SWJN*, Vol. 9, p. 470.

[Enclosure: 1]

J.B. Kripalani to Sarat Chandra Bose, 22 August 1939

AICC Papers, File. No. PL-9/1939, NMML.

The attention of the last meeting of the Working Committee held at Wardha was drawn to the fact that a member of Congress party in the Bengal Assembly, Sri Narendra Nath Das, has accepted the position of the vice-president of Hindu Mahasabha (Bengal). The Committee were of the view that Sri Narendra Nath Das be asked to make his choice between remaining a Congress member in the Bengal Assembly or the vice-president of the Hindu Mahasabha. He must resign the one or the other position. You will please communicate this decision of the Working Committee to him. If he persists in holding his office in the Hindu Mahasabha, you will have to ask him to resign from the party and also vacate his seat and seek re-election on some other than the Congress ticket. May I request that you will inform this office about the decision of Sri Narendra Nath Das and the action that you, as the Party leader, propose to take in the matter?

[Enclosure: 2]

Narendra Nath Das to Bose, 30 August 1939.

Received your letter dated 11/8/39 and also the letter of the Working Committee forwarded by you....

In the Congress I have been many times honoured with posts of presidentship in my sub-division, dictatorship in the CD movement in the district, often without my knowledge and consent with this very motive of service I also entered the Hindu Mahasabha and have been rendering service to the organization for the last 13 years. Congress to me is an organization for political freedom. Hindu Sabha to me is an organization for the regeneration and uplift of my community. The cause of political freedom is very necessary for me and the cause of Hindu regeneration and uplift is very essential for me. One is the body and the other is the soul.... The Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha are to me images of the divinity for service. When they are no longer compatible with my ideal of service of freedom and of re-generation and uplift of my nation and community, I shall not hesitate to throw them into the *Ganges* with due honour and ceremonies. The Congress Working Committee have passed many resolutions, which have not been acceptable to many of its devoted followers. We revolved against its resolutions with regard to the Communal decision in 1934 as anti-national and undemocratic and that attitude still stands. Many of us consider the resolution mutilating the *Bande Mataram* song as another act of meek submission to Muslim communalism and of repudiation of the true ideal of nationalism. Similarly the resolution with regard to the Hindu Mahasabha is not only unwarranted and unreasonable but extremely uncharitable. The Muslim League came into being with the avowed object of combating the Indian National Congress and it has been performing its function with consummate success. But what has been the attitude of the Congress towards the League and Muslim communalism? The Moplah rising culminated in untold suffering to thousands of Hindus.... Abduction and rape of Hindu women are things to be tolerated for the sake of Hindu-Muslim union. Riots, plunders, pillages and destruction of Hindu lives and properties by the Muslims must be passed over. But if the Hindus organize to defend themselves against the onslaught of Muslim vandalism, they must be rebuked, discouraged and often asked to submit without a murmur. This has been the Congress attitude with regard to Muslim aggression on the Hindus.

It is the Hindu brain which conceived the Congress. Hindu sacrifice and suffering strengthened and ennobled it, Hindu service maintained it, and Hindu love endeared it to the people in general. But curiously enough it has been beating its friend and pandering to its enemies. The Congress has come to entertain the notion that the Hindus exist for the Congress and the Congress can, without hesitation, exploit the Hindus to meet the exigencies of the hour, and that it has no obligation towards the Hindus and their interests. Congress idea of nationalism is to fight the British, and allow the political power gained through the fight and pass into the hands of communal Mussalmans without a protest....

Some of the Congressmen argue, 'Let us anyhow get the help of the Muslims and drive away the British; and when they are gone, we shall be free to meet the situation.' Hence the placating. But what has been the result? The more the Congress bows down and lowers its flag of nationalism the greater is the alliance between the Musalmans and the British. Still the Congress will not understand.

If the Congress fails to understand the situation it is no reason why others will not warn their countrymen against the pitfall. It must plainly declare that I don't agree with the communal policy of Congress.

And what had been the fault of the Hindu Mahasabha? It tries to protect Hindu lives, honour of Hindu women and civil and religious rights of the Hindus against onslaughts and aggressions. Its aim is to eradicate social evils and to organize the Hindu society into a homogeneous whole—vital, forceful and exerting its ennobling influence upon humanity at large. It wants to remove untouchability and drive away missionary wolves hovering to carry away its children and bring back those snatched away by them by performing *Shuddhi*. Its political aim is that all Indians—Hindus, Muslims or Christians, shall have equal rights, politically, socially, in civil and religious spheres. Its only great fault is that it does not like to be swallowed by others, that it does not want to cripple its political, social and religious rights to placate the hunger of Muslim communalism as the Congress wants it to do. It upholds the true ideal of nationalism in its fullest aspect, while the Congress lowers its flag (vide Congress resolution on Communal Award) of nationalism. If there be any organization in India which does not claim any special favour for its community, it is the Hindu Mahasabha; if there is any organization which combats communalism in body politics it is the Hindu Mahasabha....

Now to the immediate issue of my becoming the vice president of the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha. For the last 18 months I held no office in the Mahasabha and I had a mind not to accept any office. I have as yet got no official intimation of my appointment so that I could decline the offer. But your letter and the letter from the WC compel me to accept the post of vice-presidentship officially offered to me. I have been asked to make the choice and this choice I have made.

As to the request to resign from the Congress Assembly Party, I heartily comply with....

But the second request of resigning from the seat has no legal and moral binding on me. I accepted the Congress nomination on the express condition that I shall always serve the Hindu Mahasabha....

I have given serious thought to your letter and the letter from the Working Committee, and have come to the conclusion that consistent with self-respect I can have no connection with your party and the Working Committee, till the letters in question be withdrawn. If I am convinced that I am wrong I must apologize and express regret. If not, I shall not allow any organization, however powerful and great, to dictate upon my ideal of service. If my faith in the *Paramatma* does not forsake me, I have nothing to fear.

[Enclosure: 3]

Kripalani to N.N. Das, 22 September 1939

AICC Papers, File No. PL-9/1939 (Bengal), pp. 35-49, NMML.

Dear friend,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 30th August. I am forwarding copy of it to the General Secretary, AICC, who will place the matter before the Working Committee for the latter's decision.

In the meanwhile I should like to offer a few observations on some of the points raised by you.... So far as liberty to serve any political organization you like according to your personal convictions, I am only concerned with the point whether you can serve both the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha after the specific direction of the Congress Working Committee to the contrary.

You state that Congress nomination was given to you on the understanding that you will not be asked to sever your relations with the Hindu Mahasabha. I made enquiries on this point with Sjt Suresh Chandra Majumdar, Dr B.C. Roy, and Sjt Satyendra C. Mitra, none of whom have any recollection that nomination was given to you subject to any condition about your continuance as secretary of the Mahasabha. Unfortunately, I am unable to trace your pledge among the records of the Parliamentary Board. Should you happen to possess a copy of the pledge or of any document which is relevant to the question I shall be thankful if you will kindly forward it to me.

But even if it were a fact that certain individuals admitted your contention in 1936, that admission could have no validity after the resolution in respect of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League adopted by the Working Committee last December. This resolution supercedes and cancels all previous decisions of understanding of every kind by whomsoever they might have been given.

Secondly, a member of the legislature elected on the Congress ticket cannot resign from the party and at the same time retain his seat. If he feels he cannot give allegiance to the Congress it is his duty to resign from the legislature and seek re-election on a ticket of his choice.

As regards the complaints brought forward by you against the Congress Assembly Party, Bengal, they are, I confess, news to me. This is the first time that they have been communicated to me. I have no recollection of any grievance of yours having been brought to my notice by anyone else, far less by you personally....

101. The Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 29 August 1939.

The enthusiasm which the forthcoming session of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha in Calcutta has evoked throughout Hindu Bengal should give our Congress leaders food for thought. It would be extremely unwise to dismiss this phenomenon as an outburst of reactionary communal mentality, for Hindu Bengal is essentially Congress-minded in the sense that it believes quite sincerely in the goal of complete national independence. The Hindus of Bengal had cherished this ideal long before it received the official recognition of the Indian National Congress. They have proclaimed their faith in it with their life-blood, and even today they are as ready as ever to undergo any amount of suffering and sacrifice to attain that end. Nor is the enthusiasm that is visible among our young men today the result of any anti-Muslim prejudice. Though the Hindus in Bengal are a minority community, they have always advocated joint electorates, knowing fully well that the system might be worked to injure legitimate Hindu interests. They have never demanded special

favours and safeguards for themselves, and they have always been of the opinion that if only the artificial barriers that had been set up between the masses of Hindus and Muslims in the shape of separate electorates could be broken down, the two communities would heartily join each other in the economic and political fields to build up a healthy and free national life.

How is it then that Hindu Bengal, in spite of its ardent faith in nationalism, is today rallying round the Hindu Mahasabha, though this body has been banned by the Congress as a communal organization, unworthy of the allegiance of all sincere nationalists? The answer can only be that Hindu Bengal has not accepted the Congress verdict as correct. The Hindu Mahasabha, our young men point out, has declared its faith in national freedom as unequivocally as the Congress, and has never demanded for the Hindus any political rights which it is not prepared to share with the Muslims on equal terms. While prepared to recognize the right of any minority community to preserve its own culture, religion and language, the Hindu Mahasabha however does not believe that any real unity between Hindus and Muslims can be arrived at by making concession after concession to satisfy the greed of reactionary communal groups who want to lean for support on foreign imperialists for the maintenance of their privileged position in the Indian body politic. Such concessions, apart from the fact that they are unjust to other communities, tend in the long run to perpetuate the division of Indians into separate communal groups and affect adversely the nationalist ideal which presupposes a united Indian nation.

Our young men have come to believe that there is a good deal of truth in these contentions; and their belief has been further strengthened by the vacillating attitude that the Congress has all along taken towards the unjust and anti-national Communal Decision of the British Government. That Decision, as is well-known, has hit Hindu Bengal very hard, and has put in power in this province a group of communal reaction who are constitutionally incapable of thinking of the nation except in terms of their own community. A decent public life in Bengal has become an impossibility, and our young men feel that by tolerating the Communal Decision, the Congress has not only let down its own supporters in Bengal, but has unwittingly endangered the growth of national life in this province. It has been declared by responsible Congressmen that the Communal Decision will hold the field so long as Hindus and Muslims do not arrive at an agreed solution of the communal problem, and that not till the communal problem is solved in this fashion can there be any resumption of the struggle for national emancipation. This, argue our young men is simply moving in a vicious circle. If, as has often been declared by Congress leaders, the communal problem is to a large extent the creation of British imperialism, is it reasonable to expect that those who are opposed to a satisfactory solution of the problem consistent with Indian nationalism will withdraw their opposition with a view to facilitate their own extinction? Is it moreover in the nature of communally minded self-seekers to forego voluntarily the special privileges they have acquired as a reward for their anti-national activities in the interest of nationalism itself? The Congress has as yet been unable to find an honourable way out of the communal difficulty, and there is scarcely any hope of a brighter day dawning in the near future. Must then a handful of communal reactionaries be permitted to hold up the national advance?

This, contend the Hindus of Bengal, is an impossible position to take up. Moreover, they are not at all satisfied that the preparations for a national struggle which Congress leaders are said to have in contemplation will at all be adequate for the purpose of attaining the Congress goal. 'I repeat what I have said a thousand times,' declared Mahatma Gandhi on a recent occasion, 'that if millions spin for Swaraj in the spirit of non-violence, there will probably be no necessity for Civil Disobedience. It is the surest method of converting the enemy.' Unfortunately the exact connection between spinning and the attainment of political Swaraj is not so obvious to the ordinary Hindus of Bengal. Moreover, they do not share the belief that the pursuit of the national ideal

should be stopped for fear of any manifestation of violence on the part of communal reactionaries. 'When India counted,' said Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer on a recent occasion, 'when India was magnificent, when India conquered, when India was heroic, when India was a land of splendour, when India colonized, she was aggressive. To say that the message of Hinduism is non-violence is not true. It is not Hinduism; it is not Hindu philosophy. It is Jainism, it is one aspect of Tolstoyism.' Can this be true, even if it is a political Moderate who says this?

Torn by doubts and disappointments, the Hindus of Bengal have arrived at the conclusion that it is only by consolidating their own strength that they may expect a satisfactory solution of the communal or national problem. It is possibly this which explains their enthusiasm for the Hindu Mahasabha which promises a way out of the present difficulty.

102. On Hindu Mahasabha Strategy: V.D. Savarkar to Tatyrao, 6 September 1939

Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML.

My dear Tatyrao,

I am sorry that it is for the first time since I have become Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha that I have not to attend the meeting of the Working Committee. However, the circumstances are such that we can not help it. I, therefore, communicate my views for consideration in the Working Committee.

We must watch as to what is the decision of the Congress Working Committee. So far as Gandhi's interview with the Viceroy and his subsequent statement has been able to disclose, it appears that they would not non-cooperate with the British government. The Rightists are also trying to win over the Leftists in this matter. Under these circumstances, our non-cooperation is unthinkable. If we try to do it we shall expose ourselves and nobody (sic). Our policy hitherto, also, has been that of responsive co-operation. We should, therefore, reiterate it and add that the Hindus should get their due share in the army.... Our bargain should be realistic and not idealistic. In one of our resolutions we must point out to the danger from the north-west Muslims to India and their military prowess which the British have helped to increase, both consistently and unconsciously (sic). If, therefore, the British are sincere to make India self-sufficient for its internal and external defence it should help the Hindus to equip themselves.

103. The Hindu Mahasabha and War: Ganpat Rai to M.R. Jayakar, 7 September 1939

M.R. Jayakar Papers, File No. 709, 1939, NAI.

... As you have been interested in the deliberations of the Hindu Mahasabha, I avail this opportunity to write to you in this connection as well. Sir Bhai Parmanand¹ has already made his views known through the press for unconditional support of the British. We cannot say as to what are the views of our esteemed President, Mr V.D. Savarkar, but if Baba Rao Sarkar can be regarded as the index of the mind of the younger Savarkar, then the attitude of Savarkar brothers will also be similar as that of Shri Bhaiji. In spite of all this on the part of the Hindu Mahasabha leaders we feel that the representatives of the British government in India do not reciprocate in the courtesy due to our leaders. The Viceroy has not thought it fit to invite and take into confidence Shri Bhai Parmanandji, our President, Mr Savarkar or even Dr Moonje, who is on visiting (sic) terms with him. Anyhow, our leaders are acting admirably on the principle of *Gita* 'action is the duty, fruit is not the concern'.

The British statesmen should know as to who are their friends and who are their foes and should assess them at their proper value. It is a pity that in spite of the fact that several members of the Central Legislature, including a leader of a party like M.S. Aney, drew the attention of the Viceroy to invite the Hindu Mahasabha leaders, he has not so far done it. Such an attitude on their part exasperates and estranges the feeling of those who want to befriend the British statesmen. The extremists, therefore, make the people to believe that it is by giving a fight to the British that they can be brought round. It is not possible for you as a Privy Councillor of His Majesty's Government to bring home to the people at the helm of affairs to know their friends and foes in the right perspective. Can you do it and oblige?

¹ Bhai Parmanand (1874–1947); born in 1874 at Karyala, near Chakwal in district Jhelum, Punjab; son of Bhai Tarachand, a soldier served in the British army; early education at Chakwal, B.A. from DAV College, Lahore and M.A. in History from the Punjab University; started his career as a lecturer in DAV College Lahore; came under the influence of Arya Samaj quite early in his life; visited South Africa in 1905, to do propaganda among the Hindus; implicated in the first Lahore Conspiracy Case and was sentenced to death but it was commuted to life imprisonment by the Viceroy Hardinge; sent to Cellular jail in 1920 due to the intervention of C.F. Andrews; participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement but later became a bitter critic of the Indian National Congress; joined Hindu Mahasabha and was elected its President in 1937; elected to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1931 and in 1934; he opposed the caste system and had founded an organization *Jaat-Paat Tōrak Mandal* for breaking the caste barriers; died at Jullunder on 18 December 1947.

104. Hindu Mahasabha and War: M.R. Jayakar to Ganpat Rai, 12 September 1939

Ganpat Rai Papers, File No. J-4, NMML.

Dear Mr Ganpat Rai,

Your letter of the 7th reached me yesterday. I appreciate all that you write therein and feel, as you do, that a prominent Hindu Sabha leader like Mr Savarkar should not been left out of account by the Viceroy. But perhaps the fault is Mr Savarkar's own. It does not look right for a great Hindu leader, as he is, to sit silent for eight to ten days, when all important men, including communal leaders like Sir Sikander Hyat Khan and Mr Jinnah, have made statements to the press regarding their attitudes towards the war. Mr Savarkar should have come out, immediately after Sir Sikander had spoken in such clear and persuasive terms. In public life, you know, people value and esteem you to the same extent as you do yourself and I am not surprised that the Viceroy paid no attention to Mr Savarkar. Look at the statements of Mr Gandhi, and Mr Jawaharlal Nehru. They came out promptly and courageously with their views. They did not wait for the holding of their Party meetings. The same was the case with Mr Jinnah and it did strike even a detached observer like me that Mr Savarkar spoke nothing at the proper time. This, in my opinion, was a grievous failure. A Hindu leader of his importance and influence should have acted with more promptness and courage and let the Viceroy feel that his position in Hindu Public life was so eminent that his opinions, though only personal, counted in the matter....



105. On Communal Award and 'National Demand':

M.S. Aney¹ to Indra Narayan Sengupta, 21 September 1939

M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, Part 2, NMML.

7 Cart Road

Simla

21 September 1939

My dear Indra Narayan Sengupta,

Many thanks for your letter dated the 10th instant. I received the telegram from Mr Dulal Mitra. You must have by this time read the resolution of the Congress Working Committee held at Wardha. It is difficult to bring home to those who are at present responsible for shaping Congress policy and running (illegible) organization, the truth that the communal award is mainly responsible for the communal spirit which is rendering united action almost impossible.

At this time, any how, we must try to urge on them at the Congress session of the AICC the need of drafting resolution of National demand, which will do away with the communal system of representation on the basis of separate electorate.

The Muslim League resolution is conceived in the spirit of killing the idea of an united Indian Nation once for ever. I am very much doubtful about the attitude of the Congress and its effect on the Government. A threat of Direct Action has, to my mind, no chance of being effective. But, however, there are people who like to indulge in brave language irrespective of any considerations.

In conclusion I only want to assure you that I shall not fail to press your view and that of the Executive Committee before the ensuing meeting of AICC I myself, however, think that we ought not to rely on the Congress organization for any help to rescue Bengal and Punjab out of its present state of helplessness, mainly brought about the present constitution based on the communal award. For this the Bengal Hindus must unreservedly come out and make common with the Hindus in other parts of India, irrespective of their being Congressmen or not. Then alone we shall be able to carry on an All India agitation on this point at this very time on a scale of which the Congress will have to take note and the Government also will not be able to ignore.

With my best regards for you,

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

¹ M.S. Aney (1918-68); a veteran Congress leader from Maharashtra; he was born at Vani, Vidarbha and was educated at Chanda and Nagpur. He practiced law at Yeotmal, 1910-21. He formed the Yeotmal District Association, 1910. He joined the Home Rule League and later opposed the Non-Cooperation movement. He was member, AICC, 1920-30, and its Working Committee, 1924-25, 1931-34. He opened a branch of the Swarajya Party in Berar, 1923. He was member, Central Legislative Assembly, 1924-26, 1927-30. He resigned from the Central Legislature, and was interned for six months in 1930. He was also a member, Viceroy's Executive Council, 1941; High Commissioner to Ceylon, 1943-45; member, Constituent Assembly, 1946-47; member, Lok Sabha, 1959, 1962-66, and Governor of Bihar, 1948-52. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1968.

106. The Hindus and Congress

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 23 September 1939.

23 September 1939

The speech delivered by Mr B.C. Chatterjee¹ as President of the Bakarganj District Hindu Conference ought to be read, marked and inwardly digested by every Bengalee Hindu, Congress

or non-Congress. Those who are guiding the policy of the Congress in the provinces outside Bengal should also go through it with care, if only to understand the feeling of a growing section of the Hindu community. There are two important points in the address. He has devoted a considerable part of the speech to expressing the baselessness of the accusation that the Hindu Mahasabha is a communal body. He has dwelt on the glory of the Hindus and the greatness of the Hindu religion and culture. He has shown why our young men instead of turning up their nose at the suggestion that they ought to work for the preservation of their religion and culture, should consider it their pride and privilege to help this noble cause. There is nothing new in this part of the address. Yet what Mr Chatterjee has said in his fine and forceful language requires to be again and again impressed upon the Hindu youths of today who under the inspiration of an ill-assimilated political philosophy of the West have been inclined to underrate the greatness of their own heritage. We thank him for this impassioned appeal to his co-religionists to shake off their apathy to the interests of their religion and community. But what has invested the address with special importance is the bold, eloquent and unambiguous plea for the Hindus to refuse to play the same old game as before to discredit the Congress Governments.

The latest instance of this was furnished the other day at Patna at the Conference of the All India Muslim League where not only Mr Jinnah and Mr Huq but other eminent Muslim leaders, one of whom was Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, Premier of the Punjab, made most violent attacks on the Congress Provincial Governments in the most irresponsible and undignified language. In the intensity of their hatred, they did not hesitate even to threaten Civil Disobedience against them on the ostensible plea of defending legitimate Muslim interests. In a statement issued to the Press the other day Mr Jinnah fell foul of both Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for criticizing this conduct of Muslim leaders. 'All I can say,' declared the League leader, 'is that Pandit Nehru is either utterly ignorant of what is going on in his own province or that he has lost all sense of fairness and justice when he characterized the charges against the Congress Governments as baseless.'

The reply which Pandit Jawaharlal has now given to these reckless allegations of atrocities is quite worthy of the great Indian leader. He has asked Mr Jinnah to have the courtesy to inform him of these 'atrocities'. And he has agreed to have these charges placed for investigation before 'any independent and impartial person or persons who could be accepted by him or me as such.' We shall wait for a straight reply from Mr Jinnah to this straight question. It will definitely not do for him to prevaricate. Day in and day out certain Muslim propagandists encouraged by the example of Mr Jinnah and other Muslim public men, from whom the country had a right to expect a better conduct, have been spouting venom against the Congress Ministries. Even a cursory glance at some of these statements would be enough to create an impression as if the Congress Cabinet in different provinces has taken a vow to ruthlessly suppress the Muslim community. The mischief that is being done to the country by such unscrupulous propaganda is incalculable. This cannot be allowed to go on indefinitely with impunity. It is absolutely necessary in the higher interests of the land that a quietus should be given to these allegations once for all. The authors of these accusations must be definitely pinned down to their statements and made either to verify or withdraw them on pain of the gravest public censure.

The report issued by the Committee appointed by the League to investigate the charges against Congress Ministers was published the other day. But as we pointed out in commenting upon it, this document has singularly failed to carry conviction. The country is entitled to know if this is all that Mr Jinnah and his friends have got to say to blacken the administration of the Congress in the provinces under its charge. If that is so, all fair-minded persons will agree to dismiss the League's chargesheet against the Congress as a huge bluff. Still the Congress will not object to its being

subjected to a scrutiny by an independent and impartial tribunal if the Muslim leaders so desire. If, on the other hand, Mr Jinnah has got other instances of Congress 'atrocities' up his sleeves, let him also come out with them at once. Let the bubble be pricked once for all and the country have peace.

Mr Jinnah and his associates have exhausted the English vocabulary to condemn Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress. Let us however hasten to assure them that if they can prove their allegations, Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress High Command for whom no abuse by them is now too strong will be the last persons to tolerate such conduct on the part of the Congress Ministries. If this can ensure a better understanding between the two communities, Mr Jinnah may rest certain no effort will be spared on the part of the Congress to bring this about.

¹ Bijay Chandra Chatterjee (1878–1973); became a Barrister in 1905 and took part in the Swadeshi Movement; assisted Aurobindo Ghosh in running *Bande Mataram*; also associated with Bipin Chandra Pal's *New India*; attended Surat Congress Session, and felt frustrated over the Moderates–Extremist division; concentrated on legal practice and became famous for his performances in the 'political' cases, including the case of Hijli Prison Police Firing (the early-1930s); also associated with the renowned Bhowal Saniyasi Case (during the 2nd World War); a son-in-law of the illustrious Surendranath Banerjea, he was connected with the Hindu Mahasabha movement in Bengal.

107. On the Muslim Movement: Gokul Chand Narang to a Minister in UP, 7 October 1939

This letter was addressed to 'one of the Ministers of UP'. A copy was sent to B.G. Kher on 7 October. It was intended 'only for you and your Hindu colleagues'. B.G. Kher Papers, File No. 15, NMML.

Dear Sir,

I have long been wishing to write to you on what I consider to be a matter of paramount importance. You cannot have been entirely indifferent towards it, but as the public at large does not know what steps you have taken to meet the exigencies of the case, I am venturing to write to you on the subject. The matter to which I draw your attention is the menace arising from the activities of the Muslim all over India to the peace and tranquility of the country and particularly to the safety of the Hindus. The frequent occurrences of communal riots in various provinces of India, particularly in the UP, must have convinced you that there are organized forces at their back.

The Muslim League has shown extraordinary activity during the last year or so. The Congress meets once a year but the Muslim League has held a large number of sittings during the last year or eighteen months and speeches made at its various session by some of the most prominent Muslims in India, including the Premiers of the Punjab and Bengal, have established beyond a shadow of doubt that the Muslims in whatever position and whatever walk of life they may be, are at one so far as the question of their communal prestige and denomination is concerned. They have made it clear that they are not going to be treated as a minority and they will spare no pains to prevent the Congress (which according to them represents the majority community) from securing any position of dominance in India and that they will consider no sacrifice too great to save the Muslims from being placed in what they consider a state of subservience. Their position obviously is that in provinces, where they are in a majority they may rule without any let or hindrance, and in provinces, where they are in a minority, they should not allow the majority community to rule. It may be said that they are being encouraged in taking up this unreasonable attitude by the 'third' party. But it would be unsafe to beguile oneself with this doubtful consolation and to shut one's

eyes to facts. The real reason for this bold and, from the Congress point of view, unreasonable attitude of the Muslims is their consciousness of their physical superiority, and the conviction, for which there is ample justification, (thanks to the communal solidarity and the fanaticism of the Muslims) that they can beat the Hindus if an occasion arises for the settlement of issues by recourse to arms.

Apart from the rabid speeches made at the various sessions of the Muslim League and other Muslim bodies and inflammatory sermons preached in the mosques (of which no reports are published in the papers) which are uniting the Muslims and inciting them against the Hindus, several organizations have been set on foot in various parts of India to organize Muslims and prepare them for the civil war which the Muslims are trying to precipitate in the country. The belief is widespread that the moment British prestige, influence and power suffer any shock in this country on account of Britain's difficulties in Europe, they should and would seize the opportunity of establishing their dominance in India. And it is not inconceivable that their expectations may be realized. The British Government when being pressed abroad and pinpricked by the Congress in India, begins to feel signs of weakness may, as a last resort, make common cause with the Muslims and be content to share the power in India with them. It will not be difficult to devise suitable machinery for the purpose. The Muslims are making frantic efforts to delay the Federation as they feel that with war clouds looming everywhere, time may fight on their side, with the result that while Britain may suffer a reverse somewhere, they will have time to expand and perfect their organization, and the Congress in their pursuit of abstract ideals are nicely playing into their hands in opposing the introduction of Federation, and are also threatening to oppose military measures on the plea of fighting imperialism. It has been truly said that the Hindus as compared with Muslims are mere *bachchas* in practical politics. Those who raise their voice on such matters are condemned and brushed aside as narrow-minded communalists.

Of the various organizations referred to above, the most notable is the Khaksar movement of which you must have now come to know something. According to reliable reports, the Khaksar army which is armed with spades, consists of over four lakhs of people. They are properly drilled. They hold their parades almost everyday and their rallies are held periodically. These rallies are attended by thousands of people. Mock fights are held in which plenty of ammunition is consumed in the form of fire-work, bombs and toy cannon. Many people are injured on both sides and yet there is no complaint and no notice taken by the police. The plan adopted in these mock fights is that the *Khaksars* present in the rally are divided into two opposing armies. One is called the army of Islam and the other the army of *kafirs* or infidels. The fight continues for a considerable time with the result of course that the army of infidels is defeated. The leaders of the defeated army are brought before the commander of the army of Islam, and they are offered two alternatives, namely, either to embrace Islam or prepare themselves for execution. They humbly say that they are prepared to embrace Islam and thereupon they are pardoned and restored to freedom. The strongholds of these people are in the Punjab but they are to be found in varying numbers in almost all the provinces and Indian states. The movement in spite of professions to the contrary is a purely Muslim organization. Its leader is one Inayatullah Mashriqi¹ who is a graduate from Cambridge and has held good position in the Education Department of the Government of India and has also been Vice-Principal of the Government Islamia College at Peshawar. He resigned his job in order to start this organization. The object of the organization as declared in the literature of the movement and in their official organ *Al-Islah* is to establish Muslim domination all over the world. The Government is taking no steps to check this movement. On the other hand it appears that the Government so far as the Punjab is concerned is morally afraid of the movement or is probably secretly encouraging and supporting it. Only a few months ago, Mr Mashriqi gave an

ultimatum to the Punjab Government in writing that if his demands which were fairly far-reaching were not accepted by the Punjab Government, he would march upon Lahore with a force of four thousand *Khaksars*. A copy of the official organ was brought to me and I found that definite orders had been issued by Mr Mashriqi to the Commanders of various detachments in scores of different places to reach Lahore on the date which he would fix, with a sword hanging on their left and with a copy of *Quran* hanging on their right side and with a piece of cloth wound round their heads to serve as a winding sheet at the time of burial, if they were killed. The Premier sent his own brother-in-law who is one of the chief Parliamentary Secretaries to the headquarters of the organization to prevent the invasion by giving assurance of early compliance with his demands. Mr Mashriqi considered it his first victory. We shall not be surprised if he resorts to this threat when he wants to enforce any other of his demands. Mr Mashriqi has great ambitions and has openly declared in his paper that his aim is to occupy the same position among Muslims as Hitler has among Germans and Mussolini has among the Italians. People might have laughed at him when he started his movement with such high-sounding pretensions, but now the Muslims look upon him with deep reverence and awe while the Hindus regard him with fear. Series of articles appeared in the *Civil and Military Gazette* describing the aims and objects of the movement and the recent activities of the organization. The assets of the society are said to amount to about 19 lacs and as there were indications that the movement was in receipt of monetary assistance from foreign sources, the Government of India are reported to have instituted an enquiry. The movement is fraught with danger and if it is allowed to grow unchecked, may overwhelm the whole country.

The second movement which has also its headquarters in the Punjab is the *Hizbullah* movement, whose head is the Sajjada Nashin of Jallalpur Keekna in the Gujarat district. The Pir is a brother of Sir Mehar Shah, a prominent member of the Central Assembly and a well-known figure in Delhi and Simla. The *Hizbullah* movement is said to have a membership of about two lakhs. Most of them are armed with swords, though they are not well-drilled like the *Khaksars*. This is an entirely Muslim body and is manned by the best manhood of the Punjab, belonging to Gujarat, Jhelum, Shahpur and other districts of the north-western Punjab from which the flower of the Muslim element of the Indian army is recruited. The object of this movement is also to establish Muslim domination as soon as an opportunity occurs.

The third organization is that of the *Ahrars*. This is not so far a military movement but its members are actuated by the same motives. They profess to be nationalists claiming comradeship with the Congress but they never merged themselves into it. They are opposed to the Unionist Government in the Punjab—not on the grounds that the said government is not sufficiently nationalistic but—on the ground that it has not advanced the cause of Islam as the *Ahrars* would have liked it to do. They have recently distinguished themselves by attacking and breaking-up Congress meetings. One of their leaders is just now opposing Dr Kitchlew at Assembly bye-elections at Amritsar.

The fourth movement is that of the *Nili Posh* volunteers of which the notorious Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, member of the General Assembly, is the head. These people are bitter communalists and fanatical Muslims. Owing perhaps to the unreliable character of its leaders, the movement has not made much progress but is certainly fraught with dangerous potentialities.

The fifth movement is the *Red Shirt* movement of which doubtless you have heard before. It is confined to the Frontier Province but is not less dangerous. It is given out that the *Red Shirts* are only *Khudai Khidmatgars* or volunteers whose object is to render service to all. But those who can look beneath the surface are of the opinion that this band of about thirty thousand strong consisting with very rare exceptions entirely of Muslims is a standing menace to the peace of the province, and to the safety of Hindus living in the Frontier Province and its neighbourhood. As soon as any

trouble arises in the country, they will, it is feared, appear in their true colours as so many well-trained and well-drilled Muslim soldiers who may make common cause with other Muslim movements and make a bid for Muslim supremacy in India.

These movements are entirely independent of and in addition to the normal organizations of the Mussalmans such as the *Anjuman-i Himayat-i Islam*, *Tabligh al-Islam* and such other religious and educational movements.

You will agree with me that if the forces of law and order in any part of the country even slightly lose their hold, the organizations mentioned by me can prove extremely troublesome and dangerous. The leader of the *Khaksars* has already succeeded in intimidating the Punjab Government and has started the same tactics in UP. Neither the Congress as the representative of the whole of India nor the Hindus as such, have got any movement of this kind worth the name anywhere in India. The members of the organization mentioned by me are always on the alert and lose no opportunity or time to protect and advance Muslim interests. When communal riots break out they naturally take a prominent part in them although they may not appear in their uniforms or their regular dresses. Their discipline is excellent. Any breach of discipline or disobedience of orders is promptly punished whatever the rank or position of the delinquent may be. Recently a Minister of Sind and a respectable *Taluqdar* of UP were punished, the latter being publicly whipped for not defying Government orders as he had been directed to do by the *Khaksar* leader.

As I am writing this I find from the papers that the *Khaksars* have assembled once more in Lucknow, and are trying to challenge the authority of the UP Government. It remains to be seen how the Government of these provinces, will deal with them. The Muslims whether belonging to this organization or not have fully realized the weakness of Congress, and are taking fully advantage of it. They know that the Congress has no body of armed or even drilled men at their back and places its reliance entirely on soul force. As against this they believe in violence. while the motto of the Congress people is practically '*ahimsa paramo dharmah*', the motto of the Muslims, as prominently displayed in the last meeting of the Muslim League in Delhi, is embodied in the well-known verse of the late Dr Iqbal: 'We have been brought up under the shade of the swords. The dagger of the Crescent is our national symbol.' The result is that, being fully conscious of the hollowness of the Congress organization, they have adopted an aggressive role and have started systematic assaults on the Congress organizations. During the last two or three weeks several instances of this kind have been reported. A meeting of fifteen thousand people held in Lahore under the presidentship of Dr Gopi Chand², the leader of the Congress party in the assembly, was broken up by a dozen Muslims. The audience took to their heels, leaving their shoes and other things behind, some falling in the gutters, and running as if the whole army of Chengiz or Tamerlane had fallen upon them. The same thing happened in several other places in the Punjab, and quite a large number of such cases have been reported from UP. The dare-devil boldness of the Muslims on one side and the helplessness of the Government were brought into glaring prominence when some time ago, a band of Muslims marched upon the Assembly Buildings and took possession of the Assembly Chamber. I have not heard what action, if any, was taken by the Government against these people or to prevent a recurrence of such invasions in the future.

The other day when the Premiers of the Congress provinces were meeting in Pune in a conference, I sent a long telegram to them. Of course I do not know what attention, if any, was paid to the suggestions made by me in that telegram. I feel however that unless immediate steps are taken by the Congress governments, they will soon find themselves in hot water. Their prestige is already waning. There is a great deal of discontent even among the Hindus against the Congress, for their pro-Muslim activities, and the Muslims, in spite of the great solicitude of the Congress to placate and please them, are impervious to any such appeals and look upon the Congress as their

bitter enemy. Two years and a half have already passed. In the beginning of the fifth year of the present term of the legislature, the Congress will again be involved in the vortex of elections, and will have no time to do anything substantial. The position is going from bad to worse every day, and I need hardly say that it is no use trying to dig a well when the house is on fire. My suggestion is that the Congress governments should lose no time in organizing a strong band of Congress-minded volunteers in every province. Let them be called Civil Guards or Peace Army, or by any such inoffensive name, but they must be taught and trained to help the government in the maintenance of law and order. There is no reason why a band of a lac or so should not be organized in major provinces like UP, Bombay and Madras, and smaller bands in smaller provinces. It would not be difficult for the Congress Governments to find public-spirited people in each province who would supply funds for providing uniforms, etc. for these volunteers. If there is any technical hitch in the way of an official organization of this kind, an organization can be brought into existence under the inspiration and support of the government. There would be no legal bar in the way of the government giving decent sums as subsidies to organizations of this kind. I need hardly to say that the organization should be different from the Hindustan Scouts Association. That movement has a different object, and may be allowed to go on with its own work.

I would also suggest that immediate steps should be taken to declare the Khaksar movement an unlawful movement. No public meetings, parades or rallies should be allowed to be held in the Congress provinces. If they are allowed to go on with their activities they will soon gather such strength and prestige as would make it impossible for any government to suppress them. The evil must be nipped in the bud, though as it is the bud is already in blossom.

Another point to which I would draw your attention is that the establishment of rifle clubs and flying clubs should be encouraged all over the provinces by means of subsidies, particularly flying clubs, as you will agree with me that the future belongs to the air. If the Congress government of each province can, during the remaining time, produce a few hundred properly trained pilots in its province, and a strong band of volunteers with a few thousand young men trained in rifle clubs, they will have done a great service. The work that the Congress governments have been doing so far is on the whole commendable, but the question is whether that was the most urgent and most useful work. On this point I think opinions would strongly differ. I feel that the Congress has begun to build from the top and not from the foundations. They have entirely neglected the question of the defence of their country and seem to believe in their heart of hearts that the British government will always be there and that British arms are invincible. Circumstances may happen which may show that neither of these bases of optimism are sound. The Congress government should adopt bold policies and utilize their legal and constitutional powers to the utmost to make the people of their respective provinces as strong as possible to defend themselves against the Muslim hordes who in the first instance will over run the country, until either British control is re-established or some other power comes and takes charge of India. The letter has become longer than intended, but I trust that considering the importance of the question, you will excuse me for giving you this trouble.

¹ Inayatullah Mashriqi (Allama Mashriqi), (1888–1963); born in Amritsar, on 25 August 1888; He had a brilliant academic record to his credit; secured M.A. in Mathematics from Punjab University at the age of nineteen and set up a new record; in 1911 he got a first class Tripos in Oriental Languages and 1912 a second class Mechanical Tripos. His major fields of activity were education and politics; he worked in the Punjab, NWFP and Sindh; joined as Vice-Principal of the Islamic college in 1913; later in 1915 became Principal of this College; joined Indian Education service in 1919 and appointed Principal of the Government Training College of NWFP, 1922–31; During this time he had held various responsible posts, like the Registrar of Examinations, Inspector of Schools, etc. An ardent pan-Islamist, he unofficially represented India in the Islamic Conference at Cairo in 1926; and opposed the proposal of electing the Sultan of Egypt

as the *Khalifa-tul-Mussalman* on the ground that a vassal ruler could not be the spiritual leader of the Islamic world; organized the *Khaksar* (Servants of God) Party, 1931; opposed the Indian National Congress; he was very doubtful of the success of the non-violent movement; he could not get along with the Muslim League also; launched the *Khaksar* movement to revive the great tradition of the Muslim conquest of the world; he introduced into Indian Politics the concept of Muslim Nationalism; a strong advocate of the Working Classes and the poor; to him democracy meant Islamic Socialism, so he selected *belcha* (spade) as his party's symbol; besides numerous pamphlets, he wrote books, entitled, *Tazkara* (Urdu and Persian, 1924); *Isharat* (1931); *Kharita* and *Qual-i-Faizal*; imprisoned twice in 1939 and twice in 1940–43; he began as a communalist but during 1940s he propagated Hindu–Muslim Unity, and advised Jinnah to make an honourable compromise with Congress; In the last years of his life he was not taken seriously as he was not considered a person with a proper mental perspective; his death in Pakistan on 25 August 1963 hardly attracted any attention.

² Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava (1889–1966); born in 1889 at Sirsa in Hissar district in Punjab (now in Haryana); educated at Hissar and DAV College, Lahore; M.B.B.S. from the Lahore Medical College; entered in the politics under the guidance of Lala Lajpat Rai; arrested during the Non-cooperation movement, 1921 and 1923; member of Municipal Committee, and President, Lahore Congress Committee; member old Punjab Legislative Council, 1927, resigned, 1929; gave up practice in 1935; member, Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1937–40, 1946–51 and 1957–64; Premier, East Punjab, 1947–49 and Chief Minister, Punjab, 1950–51; left Congress in 1952 but returned to the Congress in 1957, joined Kairon Ministry as Community Development Minister, also Minister of Finance and Planning, 1959–62, and of Finance, Medical Education, Statistics and Cottage Industries, 1962–64, Punjab Government; he also served as Chief Minister of Punjab for about a month in 1964; Chairman, Khadi and Village Industries Board, 1964–66; President, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi (Punjab) and Punjab Khadi and Gramodyog Sangh.

108. Consolidating the Hindus: Dr S.P. Mookherjee's Tour

Leader, 11 October 1939.

Calcutta
3 October 1939

Dr S.P. Mookherjee, MLA, ex-Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University and vice-president of the Hindu Mahasabha, and Mr N.C. Chatterjee,¹ bar-at-law, general secretary of the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha, made an extensive tour throughout eastern Bengal and north Bengal in connection with the movement for Hindu consolidation. They addressed several meetings in various districts which were largely attended by over one lakh of people. They have issued a statement after the conclusion of their tour in Bengal, in the course of which they say:

At the conclusion of our tour we desire to express our sincere thanks to the leaders and workers in the various districts we had visited for their kindness and cordiality. We are glad to announce to all interested in the movement for Hindu consolidation in Bengal that our appeal received a warm and wide response and in a measure far beyond our expectation. The response was spontaneous and sympathetic in all the places we visited, Khulna, Barisal, Chandpur, Comilla, Brahmanberia, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur and Pabna. The different sections of the public were impressed that the policy and the programme of the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha were planned on the broadest basis of nationalism and were consistent with the evolution of real national life in this country. We did not take our stand on any narrow communal plane nor did we plead for any special favours for the Hindus. We emphasized that for the sake of nationalism itself, the Hindus of Bengal must consolidate and guard by all effective means the present attack on their rights—political, economic, cultural and social. We were privileged not only to address public meetings attended by thousands but constantly held private discussions with different groups. This latter exchange of views, which was full and frank, was extremely fruitful and cleared many misunderstandings. The district Hindu conference including a largely attended women's conference at Barisal was a great success. Delegates came from the remotest corners of the district and took part in the discussions. Various important topics were touched, for example, the communal award, the situation created by the outbreak of war, the coming census, the re-distribution of Bengal's boundaries on a linguistic basis, the removal

of untouchability and the amelioration of the condition of the Hindus, specially of the backward classes.

The pernicious effects of the communal award in its actual working were visible everywhere in all spheres of public life and we noticed a remarkable unanimity of opinion among all sections of the Hindus—whether they had the courage to say it openly or not—that if Bengal was to live, the communal award must die.

We found the countryside in a state of extreme nervousness and intimidation. The movement for Hindu consolidation was meant principally to stamp out the spirit of defeatism which has come upon the Hindus. From that point of view our campaign was eminently successful. We do not want to preach hatred against any person or community, but if we are attacked, we shall combine and resist it with all our strength.

Opposition of Muslims

Our movement received additional impetus owing to the opposition which was put forward by a small section of misguided Muslims in Barisal and Comilla. At Barisal a few boys were instigated to create some disturbance, but the situation there was tactfully handled. At Comilla a handful of Muslims made a cowardly and unprovoked attack on our party at the gate of the Victoria College when we were entering it at the invitation of the staff and students of the college. As a result of the attack Sriyut Bimal Chatterjee of our party and a few local students were wounded. We have nothing but praise for the general body of students on the patience and restraint they had shown and the risk they faced in giving us protection against hooliganism. As a matter of fact such opposition helped to strengthen our cause and to marshal all sections of Hindus, specially the youths, who fully realized the realities of the present situation. We were satisfied that these demonstrations were staged at the instance of mischievous outsiders whose influence, however, had apparently no effect in other places we visited such as Mymensingh and Pabna.

Authorities' Attitude

The authorities in their wisdom had banned our tour in Noakhali and Serajganj. We strongly deprecate the attempt to nullify the movement for the consolidation of the Hindus in these areas. If the Hindu movement is a necessity in any part of Bengal, it is in these places. However, we availed of the opportunity of meeting local leaders and they impressed upon us the serious state of affairs prevailing in these areas, particularly owing to the propaganda carried on by certain Muslims whose activities have not been checked by the authorities. Specially in Noakhali, the Hindu leaders informed us that an organized attempt was being made to start an economic boycott of Hindus. It is high time that Bengal should realize the critical situation in which Hindus have been placed in Noakhali and Serajganj. The Hindus throughout the province should make up their mind to make common cause with their fellow men in these affected areas. There should be an immediate enquiry by an independent commission in respect of the perilous situation prevailing, specially in Noakhali and Serajganj. Noakhali and Serajganj must be made an all-Bengal issue.

Hindu consolidation will not be effective unless we root out unjust inequities and inequalities in the Hindu-fold. We made it a special point to come into touch with the leaders of the so-called depressed classes and hear their points of view at different places. The problem assumes different shapes in different areas. We are glad to say that the Hindu consolidation movement bore practical fruit in several places, particularly at Chandpur where the celebrated temple of Gour-Nitai was thrown open to different sections of the Hindu community, and also at Sherpur where the well-known temple of Raghunathji was thrown open to the so-called untouchable classes.

A Serious Situation

In concluding our statement we desire to state that we are fully aware that in view of the present international crisis, undue or unnecessary emphasis should not be laid on minor sectarian issues or local problems. We are fully convinced in our minds, specially after our recent tour, that ours is not a minor issue that can await settlement but is a life and death struggle. While we call upon the Hindus of Bengal to consolidate and protect and fight for their legitimate rights, we do so with a full sense of our responsibility and ask our countrymen to face and solve a situation the like of which Bengal had seldom any experience of a situation, which if not changed, will render the Hindus of this province irrevocably reduced to a state of serfdom in all spheres of their national life.

¹ N.C. Chatterjee (1895–); educated at University Law College, Calcutta and University of London, called to Bar from Middle Temple, London; senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India; was President, All India Hindu Mahasabha for several years; was Judge, Calcutta High Court; vice-President, Supreme Court Bar Association; Treasurer, Bar Association of India; President, All India Civil Liberties Council, Vice-President, International Committee of Jurists; represented India at Commonwealth Law Conference, London, 1955; Deputy Leader, Indian lawyers delegation to USSR, 1959; represented India at International Bar Conference, Salzburg, 1960, and Commonwealth Law Conference, Sidney, 1966; was Counsel for India at International Tribunal, Geneva; member, Lok Sabha, 1952–57 and 1967–70 publications: *Company Law, Awakening of India, Problems of Jammu and Kashmir, Comparative Jurisprudence, Indian Constitutional Law, Fundamental Rights and Justice Review and Emergency and Law.*

109. Hindu Mahasabha and War

M.R. Jayakar Papers, File No. 709, 1939, NAI.

15 October 1939

Dr V.D. Savarkar, president of the Hindu Mahasabha has issued the following statement in connection with his interview with the Viceroy on the 9th of October, 1939:

In order to meet the natural demand by the Hindu Sanghathanists all over India to know precisely what attitude I took at the interview I had with the Viceroy in representing the Hindu Mahasabha view in connection with the Indian political situation created by the European war and also to refute misrepresentation by the anti-Hindusabha press, I think it advisable to issue this statement touching the salient points I emphasized during the course of my conversation at the interview and which I am free to publish without transgressing the general convention to be observed in reporting confidential consultations:

(1) The Hindu Mahasabha feels that none of the belligerent powers in Europe, including Poland and above all Russia, was or is actuated by any moral or human principle as 'Democracy' or 'the Liberties of the Downtrodden' or 'Political Justice and Equity' beyond what suited to the self-interest of the respective nations and states. The British claim in particular that they were out to render democracy safe in the world cannot be taken seriously in any other light but as a political stunt so long as they continue to hold India in political subjugation.

(2) Consequently, the Hindu Mahasabha also feels itself concerned about the issues at stake in the war in so far only as they are likely to affect the safety and interest of the Hindu Nation.

(3) That is why it is absolutely necessary that the British Government should make an unambiguous declaration of granting Hindustan the status of a self-governing dominion as an immediate step leading towards the final goal and to introduce responsible and popular government at the Centre so that the Hindus may be assured that in fighting this War they are serving the cause of their national freedom as well.

(4) Any such constitution to be immediately introduced, ought to be based on no other principle of electoral representation but the democratic one of 'One man One Vote' irrespective of race or religion, class or creed. But if that is found unfeasible, then the second best solution should be separate electorates of Hindus and Muslims, representation being based on the proportion to population. The Hindu Mahasabha will oppose any humiliating injustice done to the Hindus by levying a kind of electoral *Jizya* as the nefarious Communal Award does at present. The Hindus must have full representation in proportion to their population; they will tolerate nothing less, they demand nothing more. The depressed classes alone may be given a weightage or some such special protection for a definite period of time.

(5) All citizens whether they belong to minorities or majorities will be guaranteed full freedom to follow their faith, culture and language so far as it does not infringe on the equal rights of others and is consistent with public moral and peace.

(6) The grant of such a constitution forthwith will persuade the Hindus in their own interest to extend responsive co-operation to the British Government in so far as the defence of India during this European War is concerned.

(7) As a task of defending India from any military attack is of common concern to the British Government as well as ourselves and as we are unfortunately not in a position today to carry out that responsibility unaided, there is ample room for responsive co-operation between India and England firstly in that respect. Secondly, the probable entry of Russia in the war against England may threaten India with a far more serious danger of an invasion through Afganistan. The treacherous conduct of a very large section of the Muslims in India in the Khilafat agitation during the last Great War in 1914 has taught us a lesson never to be forgotten as it is almost sure to be repeated in any future attack on India on the North-eastern Frontier by any alien power. The tribesmen and the Muslim forces throughout Punjab, Sind, etc., are very likely to betray the Hindus and rise *en masse* in pursuance of the pan-Islamic designs to carve out an independent Muslim State or Federation stretching out from Baluchistan to Kashmir to Delhi. In view of the attitude of many a responsible Muslim organization in India, as revealed by their resolutions passed in their open sessions betraying their extra-territorial sympathies, it would be nothing short of a suicidal step on the part of the Hindus to make light of this serious danger threatening them. Under such an emergency, they will have to ally themselves with the British forces in the common objective to avert this national calamity. In order to make co-operation on the part of the Hindus in these cases effective, the British Government should forthwith take the following steps:

(a) To guard the North-Western Frontier by overwhelming Hindu military forces instead of Muslim ones; (b) to chastise the tribes with a strong hand and to tame them into such a submission as to render them incapable to dare again to rise or revolt or raid with a view to harass the Hindu population or threaten the integrity of the Indian Nation; (c) to encourage and help with arms, ammunition and experts the efforts to raise a force of Hindu National Militia meant to shoulder the responsibility of Indian defence; (d) to introduce compulsory military training in high schools and colleges throughout India, as in England or Germany with an up-to-date military efficiency; (e) to encourage and spread the movement for starting Rifle Clubs allover India which has already been set on foot in Maharashtra and Berar; (f) to modify the Arms Act to bring it on par with what prevails in England; (g) to expand on an extensive scale Indian Territorial Force and the UTC; (h) to throw recruitment open to all classes doing away with the unjust, unreal and humiliating distinction of the enlisted and non-enlisted classes and (i) to take in general every step to bring the Indian Army, Navy and Aerial forces to an up-to-date efficiency; (j) to inspire the people of India to feel instinctively that the Indian Army will be the army of the people of India and not of their

British overlords and undertake not to use these Indian forces in any other theatre of war outside India which has no direct connection with the defence of India proper.

(8) The Hindu Mahasabha emphatically asserts that as the Congress does not and cannot represent the Hindus, no constitutional or administrative settlement arrived at behind the back of the Hindu Mahasabha between the Government on the one hand and the Congress or the League on the other, will be binding on the Hindus unless and until it is sanctioned by the Mahasabha.

110. Mahasabha's Duty: Dr Moonje's Statement

Leader, 28 October 1939.

Nasik

Dr B.S. Moonje in the course of a statement to the press says:

The Viceroy and the Secretary of State have made their eagerly awaited speeches; but unfortunately they have failed to give satisfaction to any party, not excluding even the Muslim League. People cannot see why the Government should fight shy of making a clear statement that Dominion status is in accordance with the terms of the Statute of Westminster, would be given to India after the war and that the people will be called upon to present to the Government a largest measure of common agreement between the different political parties of the country, in respect of the constitution for India. It is a great pity that the Government has needlessly failed to take advantage of the situation to create an instinctive sentiment in the people of India that fighting the battles of the Anglo-German war is fighting their own battles.

The responsibilities of the Government of India, apart from the autonomous provincial governments, are two fold, that is, first, for organizing help to His Majesty's Government in England in carrying on the Anglo-German war; and second, for organizing the defence of India from internal subversive disturbances and from invasions by foreign powers and particularly from the North West Frontier.

One can quite imagine and guess the line of action which the Congress may take, steeped as it is, in Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and non-cooperation. It is bound to prove suicidal, as it has in the past since the rise of Mahatma Gandhi in the Congress.

The Muslim League, having no responsibility of their own, being the representative of merely a minority community and brought up in extra-territorial patriotism, will be sitting on the fence facing both ways, ever ready to jump on the winning side.

Under the circumstances, who else is there other than the Hindu Mahasabha to give the proper lead to the country? I am sure the Mahasabha will soon meet and do the needful.

What should the Hindu Mahasabha do? I think that no better plan of action can be evolved than, say, the following:

- (1) Working of the autonomous provincial governments with the concentrated aim of preparing the provinces for the defence of India.
- (2) Whole-hearted cooperation with the Government of India, if they would value and want our cooperation, in training Indians to undertake the entire responsibility for the defence of India, particularly from invasions from the North-West Frontier and general in the organization of Indian defence on the model of the modern European system of defence.
- (3) If the Congress were to start any programme of going to jail as a demonstrable token of our resentment which is its one instrument of universal application, we should announce our cooperation with them, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) Removal of ban on Congressmen joining the Hindu Mahasabha.
- (b) Condemnation and actively working for the annulment of the communal 'award' in cooperation with the Mahasabha.
- (c) Formation of governments in the provinces jointly with the Hindu Mahasabha.
- (d) Non-opposition to the programme of the Hindu Mahasabha of organizing a Hindu National Militia for the defence of India.

It would be the height of unwisdom on the part of the Congress to withdraw from the provincial governments and ministries but if the Congress were to decide upon such a course of action, the Hindu Mahasabha should step in to take up the place of the Congress in the provincial governments with the two-fold objects:

- (1) Frustrating the attempts of the Muslim League for the installation of their communalism in the provincial governments.
- (2) Working the provincial governments, they being autonomous and largely people's own governments, with the concentrated aim of militarizing the provinces; so that India may dispense with the now inevitable need of British help in the defence of India.

The Congress will fight the Government purely on the strength of the Hindus, Muslims will not join them. The Hindu Mahasabha, therefore, should call on the Hindus to press the Congress to accept these conditions of the Hindu Mahasabha. If the Congress will not listen to them, then they should be asked to give up the Congress and fight under the banner of the Hindu Mahasabha.

111. Bengal Hindu Mahasabha's Statement

Tribune, 29 October 1939.

Calcutta
27 October 1939

The need for the creation of an atmosphere in Bengal in which her sons may be endued with the requisite enthusiasm to make effective contribution to the successful termination of the war, is stressed in a statement issued to the Press today by the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha on the recent declaration made by His Excellency the Viceroy.

The statement says: 'In the Viceroy's declaration, and the several statements so far issued by politicians and political organizations, there is a singular reticence with regard to the special problem of Hindu minority in Bengal. We use the word "singular" advisedly as it is incontestable that Hindu Bengal yields to none in her patriotism or her selfless nationalism. The Bengal Hindu Mahasabha, therefore, thinks it necessary to point out that in order to enable Bengal to take her proper share in the responsibilities arising out of this world crisis, it is essential that an atmosphere be created by which her sons may be endued with the requisite enthusiasm and be prepared to make an effective contribution to its successful termination.

'It is a well known fact that the Bengal Hindus have been placed in a peculiarly different situation by the Communal Decision which has cut at the very root of a democratic system of self-government by denying the rights of the ruled to choose their own rulers. The system of separate electorates, together with the inequitable allocation of seats in the provincial legislature, has rendered the Bengal Hindus subject to a Council of Ministers in whose election they have no part. This indeed is the very denial of what is known as democracy in other parts of the world.

Civil Rights of Hindus

‘In the working of the so-called reforms during the last two years and a half the religious and civil rights of the Hindus of Bengal, especially in the eastern and northern parts of the province, are being trampled upon.

‘The Viceroy in his declaration says, “I am authorized by His Majesty’s Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with Indian Princes with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in the framing of such modifications as may seem desirable.”

‘If the modifications are made with the present Communal Decision remaining as their basis, the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha is firmly of opinion that no such modification would be worth making even if it were made today.

Consultative Committee

‘The portion of the declaration regarding the setting up of a Consultative Committee is jejune. This Committee will not have any other function than to tender advice which may or may not be accepted by the Governor-General. Their only effective function will be, it appears, to communicate the Governor-General’s dicta to the people and try to persuade them to act in accordance therewith. The proposal is one which shows that the British Government still think that our people are political infants.

Defence of India

‘We fully realize the gravity of the situation and the menace that confronts India. We feel it our duty to call the youths of Bengal to rally for the defence of their country and also call upon the Government immediately to create the suitable atmosphere and to devise proper machinery to provide them with military training and all other equipments so as to enable them to do their duty.’

112. Report on Sukkur Riots

All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-24, NMML.

To understand the story of the wholesale murders, arson, kidnappings and other outrages perpetrated by fanatical and lawless Muslims of Sind upon their peaceful and law abiding fellow citizens of the Hindu community, from the 19th November 1939 onwards it is necessary to know something about the Manzilgah of Sukkur, and the dispute about it (which was the immediate cause of the Muslim atrocities).

In Sukkur, on the bank of the river Indus, there is an open area bounded by a compound called by the name of Manzilgah or camping ground, since Mogul times. Within this compound there are two small domed structures one of which is now claimed to be a mosque but which have been used as anything but a mosque for at least a century. Ever since the British occupation of Sind, this Manzilgah has been used as a place for camps of Officers, for carnivals and shows, for bonfires and illuminations on the occasion of Hindu Dussehra festivals, and for miscellaneous purposes as Sind political, social and temperance conference. The domed structures have been used as office rooms, liquor distilleries, and dumping places for baggage and furniture. The inscriptions on these domed buildings show that these rooms and the Manzilgah area were places of recreation in the Mogul times. There is nothing to show that there was ever a mosque there. If the place was used as a prayer house at any time, there is nothing to show or tell that it was so.

Indeed all that could render a house unclean for the purpose of a mosque, in Islamic practice, has been done, for decades, in this Manzilgah.

The interesting point about the Manzilgah is that it is situated exactly opposite to the famous Hindu island temple on Sadhbella which stands on a rock in the midstream.

Then it would be natural to pick up a quarrel with the Hindu monks and devotees across the river by accusing them of disturbing the Muslim worshippers in the Mosque with their music and arti. The rest could safely be left to the Muslim officials in the Revenue, Judicial and Police Departments. After all, it was Muslim rule in Sind and Muslim Ministers could be safely trusted to shut their eyes to the Muslim usurpation of public areas and Hindu temples.

In 1933 some Muslims had tried to make out a case for treating the Manzilgah structures as mosques, but their spurious claim was negatived, and a British Civilian got the rooms closed and trespassers kept out. That was years ago. In 1937, unfortunately several things conspired to stimulate the Muslims to make another demand, and get what they wanted by legal means or by force.

The Muslim Leaguers in Sind (who hated the Allahbux Ministry and wanted to pull it down) saw in the Manzilgah a capital instrument for furthering their designs against the Ministry. The mass of Muslims in Sind are uneducated and are easily influenced by the fanatical preachers. It was given out to them that the Ministry were truckling by the Hindu infidels and keeping the Muslims from their rightful possession of an ancient mosque. Violent speeches were made and a nefarious propaganda carried on in the newspapers. The opponents of the present Govt, Sheikh Abdul Majid,¹ K.B. Khuhro,² Mr Gazdar,³ Mr G.M. Syed,⁴ i.e., all those to whose interest it was to pull down the Ministry sponsored the agitation.

It is so easy for unscrupulous politicians to create riots and escape themselves unscathed.

It would have been easy for the Government to expose the hollowness of this agitation, and if there was any mischief brooding or breeding to nip it in the bud. Most unfortunately, the Ministry adopted a policy which could only be called shilly-shallying. It would not decide the dispute, nor stop the agitators, but kept on procrastinating. The Hindus got alarmed and sent representations after representations. They were ready to abide by the award of an impartial tribunal outside Sind, whether the Manzilgah building was a mosque. The Ministry would make no reply even though the Premier came down to see things for himself. A rumour spread among the Muslims that the Premier was convinced of the justness of the Muslim demand, but that he was being cowed down by the Hindu Members of the Assembly. Then it became question of a jihad or religious contest with the Muslims to get possession of the so-called mosque, the disputed building and the Muslims occupied forcibly the buildings on 1st October 1939.

The Government was in full possession of the facts and knew of the bellicose preparations made by the Muslim fanatics. But beyond promulgating an Ordinance to protect the Ministers from the wrath of the Muslim mob, and giving warnings which were of no use, it did nothing. When the Muslims illegally and forcibly took possession of the Manzilgah on 1st October, the District Magistrate of Sukkur was said to content himself with taking photographs of the scene and developing the negatives in the quietness of his residence. The law-breaking Muslims, who had been marched to prison, were given the freedom of the place and the Manzilgah became a camping ground for Muslims gathered for a jihad or a religious war.

The Hindus were now thoroughly alarmed for their safety. The brutal murder of Bhagat Kanwar Ram,⁵ respected all over Sind for his holiness, and gentleness in the beginning of November and the threats of murder of Sadhbella Mahant showed them that if they wanted to live in Sind at all they should organize themselves. So a Hindu Conference was held at Sukkur on 12th November, with Dr Moonje in the Chair and Resolutions passed asking the Government to give them protection from the lawless element in the Muslim community.

Then the Ministry did a curious thing. On the 19th of November the District Magistrate under orders from them got the Manzilgah vacated by exercise of force, but no precautions were taken to protect the Hindus from the vengeance and fury of the Muslim crowd who were turned out of the Manzilgah. As this Muslim crowd marched to the city it began its work of murder and incendiarism and this butchery continued for days and spread to the mofussil. Here are some details:

About 45 Hindus were murdered in the town of Sukkur in cold-blood. Of them, 10 Hindus were burnt alive with petrol and kerosene oil in the presence of majority of Muslim Police, and Hindus were not even allowed to rescue those and give relief.

Besides these 45 murders in the town, about 120 Hindus including several babies and ladies were murdered in the mofussil, property worth about half a crore of rupees was burnt and looted and 6 girls were kidnapped by Mohammedan ruffians and treated shamelessly, one pregnant lady was killed, her belly cut and her child taken out and burnt. Several babies were put in fire and burnt.

The reign of terror spread to the villages and it was much worse there than in Sukkur. About 40 villages were affected, Gosarji most of all. In this wretched place no less than 30 Hindus were killed, some Hindu women being kidnapped, 2 of them married. (These women have been recovered since, and the wrongs they suffered are curdling and soul-harrowing.) The Muslim goondas not content with killing all the Hindu males they could lay hands on, worked brutal lust on the women in a way which recalls the days of Nadirshah. One baby was burnt in the presence of its mother, one Hindu woman's breasts were cut off, another woman's arm plucked out, a pregnant woman was hacked to pieces. A familiar feature of the Muslim work was the burning alive or cutting of the limbs of shivering Hindus. In Sind canal, first the legs of a Hindu were put in fire and then other limbs, until he was roasted alive. Photographs of some of these atrocities were available. The deeds of shame done upon women and children are such as would stagger belief.

The censorship exercised upon all the newspapers and other agencies had kept the people of Sind and of India away from knowing the true state of things. In a great many cases the mouths of the sufferers have been sealed by death or by unspeakable shame and yet ample evidence can be obtained of the atrocities committed by the Muslim goondas. The hospitals at Sukkur and Shikarpur were full. 6000 refugees from villages are wandering for shelter in Shikarpur and 3000 in Sukkur. It is difficult to give an estimate of the sufferers and the damage to property. But at a rough estimate the Muslim goondas could not have killed less than 150 in Sukkur and its villages, and several wounded hundreds while property worth more than half a crore has been stolen, burnt or destroyed.

For 10 days there were dacoities, incendiarism, and murders in Sukkur and the adjoining villages; some distant places also caught the contagion. It was the arrival of the Military that put an end to anarchy and murders. The Curfew order remained in force. After the troops had been stationed the Ministers and others turned up at Sukkur, and after full 14 days hartal in Sukkur on or about 4th December they were able to coax the Sukkur shopkeepers to open their shops and Sukkur people to go about their business. That also after telegram was received from 2 deported leaders Sjt Virumal, and Bhojraj. But the panic has not yet subsided, as Muslims threatened to have their game again if possible. Villages continue to be depopulated, and even the Premier K.B. Allah Baksh had advised the Hindus not to go back to their small villages; but make their homes in larger villages. The Governor of Sind, Sir Lancelot Graham too had promised Hindus to take care of them, but all that he did was to keep the Muslim Leaguers from surrounding the houses of the Ministers.

The condition of poor Hindus is appalling. If prompt measures are not taken to give relief to suffering Hindus, several more lives will be lost, and corruption and vice reign unchecked. It is as necessary to attend to the survivors and their needs as it was to rush to the help of those that had suffered in the Quetta earth-quake tragedy in 1935.

¹ Sheikh Abdul Majid was elected from Larkana to Sind Assembly in 1937; lost the race of speaker in the 1937 Assembly; after Allah Bux's resignation and a new ministry of Mir Bandehali Khan Talpur took over, he was Minister for Finance, Medical Public Health and Excise; a member of Public Accounts Committee, Sind Government in 1943.

² Khan Bahadur Mohamed Ayub Khuhro (1901–1980); born in 1901 in Akil in Larkana district of Sind; completed his Matriculation from Sind Madrasa, Karachi; after passing first year Arts examination from D.J. Sind College, Karachi, he left studies and took to agriculture; from 1923–36, he was a member of Bombay Legislative Council. In 1926, he joined Sind Mohamaden Association and in 1928, he opened Zamindari Bank in Larkana and elected its Chairman. He was the Managing Director of the *Sind Zamindar*, a newspaper which he founded to defend interests of Muslims in Sind. In 1929, he argued for the separation of Sind before the Simon Commission and Sind Financial Inquiry Commission, and in 1933 went to England on behalf of the Sind Mohamaden Association to plead for separation of Sind from Bombay Presidency before the Parliamentary Committee. In 1936, when Sind was separated, he was appointed a member of the Governor's Advisory Council; was elected as a member of the Sind Legislative Assembly in 1937 and was returned to Assembly in every subsequent election. In March 1940, Khuhro was appointed Minister for PWD and in 1942, he was nominated as a member of the All India Muslim League Working Committee; after the resignation of Allah Bux ministry, he joined as Revenue Minister under Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah in October 1942. He was arrested in 1944 on the charges of his alleged hand in the murder of Allah Bux in 1943, but was released for lack of evidence. He was Deputy Chief Minister of Muslim League Ministry of Sind from February 1946 to July 1947 and later the Chief Minister in August 1947. In 1948, he was dismissed by the Central Government on his opposition to separate the city of Karachi from the province of Sind. However, he managed to come back in 1951 and again become Chief Minister till 1953, when his government was dismissed. In 1954 he was made Chief Minister again to get the 'one unit' Scheme of West Pakistan passed by the Sind Legislature. After this, he was taken as a Minister in Central Government, but was soon thrown out. In 1958 he took a diametrically opposite stand and led the anti 'one unit' front. Joined the Council of Muslim League, 1967; was defeated by Bhutto in 1970 poll for National Assembly (Larkana); died at Karachi, 20 October 1980.

³ Gazdar, Muhammad Hashim; born in Jaisalmer 1 February 1898; educated from Karachi and Poona Engineering College, served Bahawalpur State from 1916–18, engaged for the design of Sukkur Barrage and Canals, joined PWD of Nizam's Government, Hyderabad 1918–21, and was connected with Osman Sagar Dam and Himayat Sagar Dam, was Dist Engineer of Karachi Local Board, 1933 and elected to the Bombay Legislative Council, 1933, elected Member of Karachi Municipal Corporation, 1934–43; joined Muslim League in 1938, and was General Secretary of Sind Provincial Muslim League and member of All India Muslim League Council, Mayor of Karachi, 1941–42; Home Minister, Government of Sind, 1942–45; Represented the Pakistan Government on the International Trade and Employment Conference, Havana, 1947–48.

⁴ Syed Ghulam Murtaza Shah Syed (1904–92); born in Sann, a village in Kotri Taluk of Dadu district in Sind; received early education in Sann and later received private tuitions. At the age of 15, he founded the Anjuman-e-Mussalmeen and entered the Khilafat and Congress movements; at 21, he was elected member and soon after, President of the Local Board, Manjhand; in 1929, he was elected as first Vice-President and later President of District Local Board, Karachi. Though a zamindar himself, he founded the Sind Hari (peasant) Committee. In 1937, he was elected to Sind Legislature Assembly and was elected president of Sind Provincial Muslim League in 1938; Minister for Education Industries and Labour in Sind Provincial Muslim League in 1938; Minister for Education Industries and Labour in Sind Government (1940) and appointed a committee for a separate Sind University and Advisory Board of Control for Sindhi literature; Member of All India Muslim League Working Committee in 1941, and was elected Chairman of All India Muslim League Conference in Karachi. In 1946 and in 1953, he was returned to Sind Legislative Assembly and in 1954, he was elected a member of the Western Zone Assembly. Bitterly opposed the Government of Pakistan's plan of Separation of Karachi from Sind and merger of provinces of Sind and Baluchistan in Western Zone which made them feel subservient to Punjab. For this agitation he was branded an enemy of Pakistan and jailed for 14 months. He was writer of distinction and his important works were 'Nain Sind Lai Jidojihad' (Struggle for a New Sind), he criticized Islam and Islamic State of Pakistan in 'Jinan Ditho Ahemun' (As I have seen), in his book *Jadid Sujasat Ja Nav Ratan* (or Nine Gems of Present day Politics), he compared Gandhiji with Prophet Muhammad and praised the former at the expense of the latter, leading to a storm of protest and proscription of the book. In 1971, he launched the demand for Right of Self-determination for People of Sind. In 1973, he founded the 'Jeay Sindh' movement which was aimed at establishing an independent Sindhi State (Sindhu Desh). For his views, he has been kept either in Jail or Solitary Confinement for a period of more than 30 years. On 19 January 1992, he died when he was in house arrest, and has been adopted 'Prisoner of Conscience' by Amnesty International.

⁵ Bhagat Kanwar Ram was born in a Hindu family but was one who journeyed beyond any narrow conceptions; he was revered as a saint by all Sindhis; he was a popular musician and was known as beautiful singer of the songs of the great Sufi poet Shah Abdul Latif; was murdered in 1939.

113. Congress Ministries Accused of Injuring Hindu Interests:
Communal Unity Not Necessary for Achieving Independence;
Dr Moonje in Patna

Searchlight, 23 November 1939.

Patna,
21 November 1939

Dr B.S. Moonje addressed a huge gathering in the premises of the Bihar Hindu Sabha this evening under the presidentship of Vaidyaraj Pandit Brijbihari Chatruvedi.

Dr Moonje said that the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi wanted two things from the British Government precedent to India's participation in war for the help of Britain. The first thing was that India should immediately be declared an independent country, and, secondly, that the British Government would accept the decisions arrived at by a Constituent Assembly regarding the future constitution of India. The British were in need of help at this time and hence the Viceroy called Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders for this purpose. Probably he presented a most horrifying picture of the terrible destruction wrought by the war and that broke down Mahatma Gandhi who offered to give unconditional help to Britain. The Congress Working Committee then met and passed a resolution demanding a declaration about independence. The Congress thought that this war would be a prolonged one and would be more dreadful than the last World War. So it seized this opportunity of making this demand from the British Government. But Britain would never satisfy the above two demands of the Congress so long they had enough military resources at their disposal. It was incorrect to say that Britain was weaker at the present moment than before. The fact was that they possessed sufficient strength to keep India in subjection. To think of extorting any concessions from Britain was absurd. Britain would never allow India to go out of their hands so long as they could help it. The Viceroy had stated, proceeding the speaker said, that communal unity in India would make it fit for having and retaining independence. So he had put communal unity as a condition for the achievement of Swaraj. The Viceroy and Mr Jinnah always talked of unity outwardly, but in their heart of hearts both of them probably were never desirous of bringing about real unity. Dr Moonje quoted instances from his experiences at the last Round Table Conference from which he pointed out that the British and the Muslim League always acted in a manner which put obstacles in the path of Unity. The Hindu Mahasabha wanted unity from its real heart, but had always been prevented by outside forces from achieving it.

Communal Award

Continuing the speaker recalled in brief the circumstances under which what was known as Communal Award had been given by the British Government. He also referred to the discussion which had followed, namely, whether it was a decision or an award and pointed out that ultimately even Mahatma Gandhi had admitted that it was a decision. The Congress used all kinds of adjectives against the war, characterizing it as reactionary, etc. but ended by adopting a neither accept nor reject attitude. And when the resolution approving the decision was moved in the Central Legislative Assembly, the Congress members remained neutral, with the result that the resolution was passed.

Neglect of Hindu Culture and Religion

Regarding the Congress rule in the provinces, Dr Moonje said that the Congress Governments had done much to harm the interest of the Hindus. He quoted the province of Bihar as an instance of this. He pointed out that in this province as well as in other Congress provinces the religion and culture of the Hindus were badly injured. He had heard that Sita whom the Hindus worshipped and adored, was described in text-books as Begum Sita while Rishi Valmiki was mentioned as Moulvi Valmiki in certain primers that were being taught in schools in Bihar. Besides the Hindus were persistently prevented from taking out religious processions and playing music in religious ceremonies. Cows were being freely slaughtered on all occasions. In fact the religious liberties of the Hindus were greatly curtailed and their culture greatly harmed by the Congress Ministries in Bihar and elsewhere.

Dr Moonje asserted that everybody wanted Independence, but why should the Hindus be asked to give a go by to their religion and culture? Swaraj had no sanctity in face of the sanctity of Hindu religion and culture. If attainment of independence meant any injury to Hinduism, Swaraj must be ignored and shunned. The Congress Ministries had failed to protect the rights of the Hindus. They were being badly treated even in the provinces where they were in majority at the hands of the Congress Ministers. India wanted Hindu Ministers and Hindu Government and not Congress Ministers and Congress Government. He exhorted the people to give a chance to the Hindu Sabha to rule in the provinces and see what it could do for the Hindus. They had been much harmed by the Congress Government. It was, therefore, the time that they should install the Hindu Sabha in the provincial *Gaddi* to rule and they would see that its work for them highly excelled (than) that of the Congress Ministries. Further Dr Moonje stated that independence could never be achieved with the help of this or that community or the Muslim community. It was a matter of pure common sense that when the vast majority of the Hindus could not attain Swaraj how could they do so with the help of the Muslim minority. History had enough instances to show that the Hindus had established empires single-handed. Shivaji funded an empire without the help of any other community. He did so with the help of his own Hindu nation.

Federation

Coming to the question of Federation, he said that Mahatma Gandhi committed a great blunder in rejecting Federation. Political wisdom lay in the fact that it should have been accepted. Rejecting the Federation meant preventing the majority of Hindus from coming into power in the Central Government. The Congress by this move greatly harmed the Hindus. Had the Congress accepted Federation it would have at present created a political crisis at the Centre and would have compelled the British to come down.

He further stated the Congress brought ruin to the Hindus in political, religious as well as social affairs.

At this stage Mr Kuaraandan Sahay, Advocate, pointed out that Rishi Valmiki was named as Maulvi Valmiki in a school primer called Rajendra Premier.

Dr Moonje regretted that a text book named after Dr Rajendra Prasad mentioned Rishi Valmiki as Maulvi Valmiki.

Further he said that the resignations of the Congress Ministries had brought in Muslim rule in India. In four provinces the Muslims were ruling directly while in the rest they were ruling indirectly. India to-day, due to the political error of the Congress was experiencing the same Muslim rule as it did centuries back.

Dr Moonje at Patna City

Dr Moonje then proceeded to Patna City where he addressed another big gathering at the Mangles Tank under the presidentship of Mr Nawal Kishore Prasad—the No. 2 Advocate. Dr Moonje in course of his address read out passages from the writings of Mahatma Gandhi from 8th to 11th November published in the *Harijan*. The speaker said that Mahatma Gandhi had called Hinduism as undefinable and elastic. He said that Mahatma Gandhi remained Hindu throughout his life but it was a matter of great regret that he could not know what Hinduism was and who were Hindus. When this being so, how could Mahatmaji be expected to do good to the Hindus. Mahatma Gandhi had next mentioned India as not being a military country. The speaker also regretted this observation and pointed out that to call India a non-military country was to speak against truth. Next Mahatma Gandhi had called the Hindus as not being a homogeneous whole like the Muslims and the Christians. The speaker said that this observation of Mahatmaji was totally wrong. The Hindus had always been homogeneous. The Muslims and the Christians had never been so. Among them were the vast differences of Shias and Sunnis, Catholics and Protestants. They caused bloodsheds amongst themselves, but the Hindus knew no such differences and quarrel amongst them was quite unknown. He wondered how the people called Mahatma Gandhi as Mahatma in face of such writings. He stated that the Hindus under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi would fall into ditches.

Dr Moonje further strongly criticized the principle of non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi and challenged his authority and that of the Congress to speak on behalf of the Hindus.

114. Bengal Hindus: Representation to Congress Working Committee

Leader, 28 November 1939.

Calcutta

26 November 1939

The following representations have been put to the members of the Congress Working Committee on behalf of Hindu Bengal by Mr B.C. Chatterjee, vice-president of the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha:

‘Hindu Bengal has been considerably puzzled by your sayings and doings during recent times. These seem to be pointedly antagonistic to the Bengalee Hindu, although he is hard put to it to find out any reason therefor. I am putting a very few of them before you for your consideration.

‘You have mutilated the national song *Bande Mataram*, without giving a single tenable reason for it. Moslem members of the Congress heard it sung from year to year without the least objection in the days preceding the political incarnation of Mahatma Gandhi, Mr Jawaharlal Nehru, Babu Rajendra Prasad and others. The song forms an integral part of the history of the liberty movement in India as it took shape and form in the pre-Gandhi era. Be pleased to remember that the promise to give India full responsible government was elicited from England by the exponents of the said movement and Gandhites had absolutely nothing to do with it. And the recent discussions have made it clear that the realization of that promise has become infinitely more difficult than it would have been had the Reforms granted under it been worked by the Hindus of India in the spirit and manner of the late Sjt Surendranath Banerjea. But in any event, what warrant had you for eviscerating the national hymn? It has brought Mr Jinnah and his League no nearer the Congress. But it has deeply hurt Hindu Bengal, Hindu India, as it could not but.

‘Take your constant talk about making Hindi, Hindustani or Urdu the national language of India. You seem to be altogether oblivious of the fact that there is such a thing in this country as the Bengalee language and literature. The fact is beyond dispute that Bengal has developed a

literature which is instinct with the spirit of immortality, and possesses an innate expansiveness which has made it into a fit instrument for the uttermost needs of expression. It has developed appropriate philosophical, ethical, scientific, and political terms which bring it into line with the English language itself. And from the point of view of culture, we find a comparison of the English translations of Tagore's works with their originals that the former fail, not unoften, to reproduce the nuances of thought and feeling which are vividly perceptible in the latter. In the Bengalee language you have the means of expressing all the thoughts which you give utterance in English. I venture to affirm you cannot predicate this of any other provincial tongue. Take Pandit Jawaharlal's fine speeches in English. You could render them into Bengalee without in the least interfering with their quality. (Be sure you could not do this in any other provincial language without destroying or considerably distorting the finer shades of thought and feeling characterizing them.) In any event, are you not morally bound to appoint a committee to go into the question of the respective merits of the various provincial languages in order that you may finally decide in the eligibility of the one best suited for the purpose in view? But you have gone on just ignoring the very existence of Bengalee.

'I beg to draw your attention in the next place to your resolution that provincial boundaries shall be demarcated on the linguistic basis. Should this be done, a good deal of modern Bihar would come back into Bengal. But you turn a deaf ear to Bengal's prayer that this should be done. And the Congress Government of Bihar resorted to most indefensible methods of coercing the Bengalee speaking people of those parts to learn Hindi, and give up Bengalee. And the Working Committee backed up Bihar. What would you have said if a British Government had attempted anything of this sort? Would you, just to ease the disquiet in the mind of the Bengalee Hindu, lay down in clear terms that the principle of delimitation of provincial boundaries on the basis of language shall apply in the matter of ascertaining territorial limits between Bihar and Bengal?

Anti-Bengalee Mindedness

'I shall give another instance of anti-Bengalee mindedness on your part. Mr Gandhi says, that is to say, all of you say, that the Congress shall not ask England to revise the Communal Award except with the leave off the Muslims. The short history of the matter is this. According to the Lucknow Pact concluded as far back as 1916, Bengalee Hindus and Moslems were to divide the Council seats to be filled by election in the proportion of 60 to 40. This was in recognition of the very generous weightage conceded to Moslems by Hindus in the provinces where the former formed insignificant minorities. As we all remember, the Reform Act which followed embodies this arrangement. By the time the Simon Commission was investigating matters in India, our Moslem friends asked that they should be given the general constituency seats in the Punjab and Bengal in proportion to their population strength in the two provinces, while the weightage secured to them by the Lucknow Pact should be maintained in the other provinces. The Simon Commission turned this proposal down as being unfair and unjust.

'But suppose this were done, Bengal's Moslems would have, in that case, had 109 and Hindus 90 general constituency seats out of the total of 199 available to them together. The difference between these would have been 19. The Communal Award gave Bengalee Moslems 119 general constituency seats, reducing those available to the Hindus and widening the difference between them to 39. Our Moslem friends were given more seats than they had asked for, and the anti-Hindu spirit of the Award, as far as Bengal's Hindus are concerned hits one in the face. Are you going to keep quiet over this monstrous piece of injustice inflicted on Bengalee Hindus? Mr Gandhi says that he is not going to complain to England about it except with the consent of our Moslem friends. The latter having got this tremendous advantage are not likely to join Mr Gandhi in such

a complaint. And so the Congress is to stand by and see this injustice continued against the Bengalee Hindus. Does not the Congress lose the reason of its being, if it has lost its moral capacity to protest against the perpetuation of a wrong of this glaring kind against twenty-two millions of its countrymen?

‘I do not wish to multiply instances but can assure the Working Committee that the Bengalee Hindu will await their pronouncement on the four matters I have placed before them with a burning anxiety. Should the decision be adverse to Hindu Bengal, or should these questions of much urgency be shelved—I suggest that the Congress should inscribe the following on its front:

“Abandon all hope ye Bengalee Hindus who enter here.”

115. The Hindu Mahasabha

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 28 December 1939.

The Hindu Mahasabha session begins today. Yesterday’s great demonstration welcoming the President-elect leaves no room for doubt that so far as enthusiasm is concerned the session will be a unique success. Indeed we have not seen such earnestness among our people for the Hindu Mahasabha within living memory. Bengal has always been enthused over the Congress, and looked askance at communal organizations. This is for the first time that a seeming departure from tradition is being seen. Yet it must not be supposed that Congress has lost its hold over Bengal. No. Had the Hindu Mahasabha been a communal organization, anything like the nature of the Muslim League, it would not have come to enlist that sympathy from Hindu Bengal as it has actually done. The fact is that the Hindu Mahasabha stands forth as a truly national organization, wedded to the policy of justice to all communities not excluding the Hindu, and seeking to arrive at a communal settlement not by surrender to unjust demands, but on a basis of justice. It has declared its faith in no unmistakable terms. It has boldly stood forth for nationalism where many say the Congress has failed. Its unqualified opposition to the Communal Award, in contrast to ‘the uncertain attitude’ of the Congress, has made it the rallying centre of nationalism, not “Hindu nationalism”, but the composite nationalism of India. It has stood forth for democracy where the Congress has allowed itself to be circumvented. These are some of its main principles. As regards its methods, they are in sharp contrast with those self-respecting of the Muslim League. The League leaders in their speech and the League in its resolutions have been brimful of hatred of the Hindu, and have not taken note of the larger interests of the country. The Hindu Mahasabha, on the other hand, has scrupulously refrained from giving offence, recognizing that the composite nationalism of India can only be based on love, justice, fair-play and inter-communal harmony. What may be termed as the militancy of the Mahasabha is its unequivocal declaration that a Hindu need not and should not be afraid of calling himself a Hindu, and that Hindus have the right to organize for the defence of Hindu interests openly, and in this respect the Moslem League has no more right than the Hindu Mahasabha. Congress influence since the Lucknow pact has produced something like a defeatist mentality in the political Hindus who are constantly in dread of being branded as communalists. There is no such feeling in a political Moslem who is not afraid of being called a communalist for seeking to protect and promote legitimate and even illegitimate Moslem interests. The Hindu under Congress influence has come to think as if Independence for India is his special concern, and the Moslem need feel little or no concern about it. The Hindu Mahasabha has tried to inculcate the doctrine that Independence of India is or should be the concern of all Indian Communities, and if the Moslems do not feel enthusiastic over it, the Hindus must not sacrifice their legitimate interests in the vain hope of purchasing Moslem support. If constitutional advance is to wait as Mr Fazlul Huq says it must, till the Moslems have had their unformulated demands

fully net, let it wait. The Hindus will, without the Moslem Leagues, fight for Independence of India, and if that is impossible, the Hindus also will wait, but will not sacrifice legitimate Hindu interests. It is therefore clear that there is a good deal of difference in policy and outlook between the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress. A large body of Hindu opinion, with which many Moslems are in sympathy, has rallied to the support of the former which it thinks has taken a stand that is at once nationalistic, statesmanlike and just to all communities.

A word to the Hindu Mahasabha. The Mahasabha should develop an organization similar to the Congress. The Congress is great to-day, for tens of thousands of its supporters have undergone suffering and sacrifice for the Congress. The Mahasabha must have whole-time workers not only at the top but down to the bottom. It must have branch organizations in all districts and sub-divisional towns and in as many villages as possible. There must be regular membership and wherever necessary the organizations must have financial support from a central fund. To start with, the Mahasabha must have paid workers in the district towns whose business shall be to tour the district and go on developing Hindu Sabha organizations. In this way a network of organizations must be brought into being.

Bengal is in crying need of such organizations. In the eastern districts of Bengal, and in some of the districts of north and west Bengal, the Hindu minorities in villages have no adequate protection. The Bengal Hindu Sabha and the Women's Protection League are almost constantly called upon to take up the cases of oppressed Hindus, particularly women. But having no adequate financial resources at their disposal, they can do little. The tracing out of culprits, the conduct of cases, etc. are, however, a small part of the protection needed. The real protection must come from the people themselves and they must be taught to organize for self-defence. District officers of the Mahasabha must collect verified cases of oppression and submit reports to headquarters from time to time. The Mahasabha should have a publicity office in every provincial capital whose business shall be to collect facts and publish reports. For some of the districts of Bengal such reports have already been prepared. A comprehensive report on the communal situation in Bengal, the Punjab and Sind should be prepared, and the work must immediately be taken in hand. Before the session is dissolved a working programme should be drawn up. We suggest that an appeal for a crore of rupees should be made by Mahasabha for its work.

116. Hindu Mahasabha Resolutions: 21st Session at Calcutta,
December 1939 or 'Demand for Dominion Status,
Consolidation of Hindus and the Formation of National Militia',
Amrita Bazar Patrika, 31 December 1939

M.S. Aney Papers, File No. 7 of the Subject Files, NMML.

The 21st session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, held at Calcutta on the 28th of December 1939 and following days under the presidentship of Mr V.D. Savarkar, passed the following resolutions unanimously:

1. Political Prisoners

(Moved from the Chair)

This session of the Mahasabha demands that political prisoners should be immediately and unconditionally released and our political exiles should be recalled immediately.

2. Reclamation of Temples

(Moved from the Chair)

The Mahasabha demands that the Hindu temples and places of worship which have been converted into mosques or converted to other uses should be restored to the Hindus, and calls upon the Provincial Hindu Sabhas to prepare an exhaustive list of such temples in their respective provinces and to press this demand before their respective Provincial Governments.

3. Khairpur State

(Moved from the Chair)

This Conference, having read the memorial of the Khairpur State Hindus, strongly condemns the anti-Hindu administration in Khairpur State since 1937 by the present Administrator and calls upon the Government of India, in the indefinite absence of the Ruling Chief, to establish a Constitutional Council of Regency in order to restore confidence among the important minority Hindu community of the State, redress their grievances, give them proper representation in the machinery of the administration and repeal the existing anti-Hindu laws, including the 1931 Association Act which the Conference considers to be an inhuman piece of legislation.

4. Sukkur Riots

(Moved by Dr B.S. Moonje)

(a) The Mahasabha unreservedly condemns the agitation started by the Muslims of Sind with the encouragement of the Muslim League in regard to Manzilgah and resorting to violent methods to take forcible possession thereof which was never used as a mosque and has been in the possession of Government as its property since British rule was established in Sind 100 years ago and since then been used for various purposes such as record offices, distillery, carnivals, celebration of Dussehra, Conference, etc. This Conference therefore appeals to the Government not to yield to the demand of the Muslims and give possession of it to the Muslims as it would result in a permanent source of communal tension as the building is in close vicinity of Sri Sad Balla, the old and famous place of Hindu pilgrimage.

(b) The Mahasabha condemns the policy of the Sind Government in not having dealt with Manzilgah agitation with firmness and for not having made adequate arrangements for public peace and protection of Hindu life and property when Government got the building of Manzilgah evacuated in spite of the fact that the authorities were apprised of impending danger thus making it easy for Muslims to indulge in orgies of slaughter, arson, loot, and kidnapping of women and children of Hindus.

(c) The Mahasabha views with utmost abhorrence the horrible atrocities, including indiscriminate murder and abduction of women and children and widespread arson and plunder, committed by Muslims on helpless Hindus of Sukkur and surrounding villages and offers its heartfelt sympathies to the victims of atrocities.

(d) The Hindu Mahasabha condemns the police of Sukkur and Shikarpur, which are composed overwhelmingly of Muslims, for their inactivity, in many cases open and shameless partisanship with the Muslim rioters, as it led to aggravation of the situation and help in causing terrible sufferings and losses to Hindus.

(e) The Mahasabha urges upon the Government to take vigorous measures for arresting and dealing out exemplary punishments to all culprits including the Police irrespective of the position they may hold in society, to rescue abducted women and children and to provide for adequate

compensation to the Hindu sufferers by levying punitive tax on the Muslims concerned in affected areas.

(f) The Mahasabha impresses upon the Government the advisability of appointing a non-official Committee of Enquiry as would command the confidence of the Hindus, the affected community, for ascertaining the causes of riot in Sind and the extent of atrocities, loot and arson committed.

(g) The Mahasabha deposes the following gentlemen to acquaint themselves with facts and figures and wait upon the Governor and the Prime Minister so that they may submit all information received in connection with the riots by the Mahasabha to their notice and may suggest means for protection of the Hindu minority in consultation with leading people of the district of Sind: Sir M.N. Mukherjee,¹ Dr Sir G.C. Narang, Dr B.S. Moonje, Mr L. B. Bhopatkar² and Mr Navalchand Navalrai.

(h) That this Conference authorizes the All India Hindu Mahasabha to start a fund for the relief of Hindu sufferers in the recent Sind riots and empowers the President to nominate an influential committee for the purpose. This Conference further appeals to all the Hindus of Bharatvarsha to contribute liberally towards the fund.

5. Hyderabad Satyagrah

(Moved by Sir Narendranath Das)

The Mahasabha views with satisfaction the successful termination of the movement of Civil Resistance in Hyderabad and expresses its deep appreciation of the heroism and sacrifice of those who joined the movement. The Mahasabha is of the opinion that the scheme of reforms announced by the Nizam's Government is inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing; but urges upon the Nizam's Government to give effect to the proposed Reforms; inadequate as they are, without further delay, undeterred by the attempts of Muslim reactionaries to hold them up.

6. Communal Award

(Moved by Sjt N.C. Chatterjee)

The Mahasabha reiterates its emphatic condemnation of the Communal Award as the basis of the present Indian Constitution and appeals to all Indians to organize a countrywide agitation for its abolition on the following grounds, namely:

1. It is against all principles of Democracy and cuts at the very root of Indian nationalism.
2. It retains and extends the evils of separate communal electorates which is fatal to the representation upon a national basis on which alone a system of responsible government can possibly be built up.
3. It introduces the unprecedented system of statutory majority and statutory minority which is a negation of responsible democratic government and only accentuates communal bitterness.
4. It prevents the free formation and grouping of parties in the Legislature on the basis of social and economic programmes on which democracy depends.
5. It has split up the body-politic and the electorate into 18 different sections or groups each of which is to elect by itself and separately its own representatives so as to render them incapable of a national outlook and common points of views, policies or programmes.
6. It is grossly unfair to the Hindus, particularly in the Central Legislature and in the Provincial Legislatures of Bengal, the Punjab and Assam where they have been allotted less number of seats than what their population strength entitles them to.

7. It gives to Europeans, particularly in Bengal and Assam, excessive weightage of representation at the expense of the Hindus.

The Mahasabha declares that there will be no peace in the country unless and until the Communal Award is annulled.

7. Frontier Ministry

(Moved by Rai Bahadur Beli Ram)

The Mahasabha records its emphatic condemnation of the weak-kneed policy pursued by the Government of India on the North-West Frontier of India which has led to frequent raids in the border districts, cases of kidnapping, loss of life of Government officers, both Indian and British, and a huge expenditure from the Indian exchequer year after year.

The All India Hindu Mahasabha regards the Congress administration led by Dr Khan Sahib in the North-West Frontier Province as a failure inasmuch as it has failed to take effective steps for the prevention of raids and kidnapping.

8. Bengal Ministry

(Moved by Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee)

The Mahasabha records its strong protest against the communal and reactionary policy of the present Ministry in Bengal in its various legislative enactments and administrative measures calculated to curb the rights and liberties of the Hindus in Bengal and cripple their economic strength and cultural life, as evidenced by, amongst others, the following:

1. Passing of the Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act which is anti-Hindu and anti-national.
2. Introduction of communal ratio in favour of Muslims in the public services not even excluding the specialized services and undue preference to less qualified Muslims.
3. Overriding the recommendations of the Public Service Commission on communal considerations.
4. Discriminatory treatment against Hindu officers in Public Service.
5. Posting, transferring and promoting of officers on communal considerations.
6. Packing particular districts with Muslims officers.
7. Failure to take effective steps in cases of dereliction of duty of public servants thereby making the Muslim masses believe that Muslim Raj has been established—thus tending to encourage them commit acts of violence against the Hindus.
8. Moslemization of certain services specially of the Education service at the cost of efficiency.
9. Discrimination against Hindus in the matter of grants and distribution of stipends and scholarships and location of schools.
10. Discrimination against the Hindus in the matter of nomination to local bodies and boards of management of educational and other institutions.
11. Lowering of the standard of efficiency and integrity of the administration by the introduction of the so-called principle of 'minimum qualification'.
12. Discrimination against Hindus in the matter of grants from the Public Exchequer for purposes of relief and in respect of Agricultural and Industrial Loans.
13. Discrimination against Hindus in the matter of grants of license and contracts.
14. Attempts to corrupt the Bengali language and undermine the formations of Hindu culture, e.g., perversion of the Bengali language, selection of text-books in primary and secondary schools subversive of Hindu religion, nationalism and culture, as also of textbooks in history containing perverted and untrue accounts of historical events.

15. Persistent negligence in the matter of shocking destruction and *desecration* of Hindu temples, images and idols and places of worship.
16. Unwarranted interference with the peaceful performance of Hindu religious rites and ceremonies in private households and public festivals.
17. Interference with the liberty of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of association and processions of Hindus, while condoning violent anti-Hindu speeches and propaganda by supporters of the Ministry.
18. Subsidizing Muslim newspapers out of public funds for purposes of communal propaganda.
19. Failure to take steps for the prevention of crime against Hindu women and for the protection of Hindu property against organized Muslim aggression.
20. Failure to give protection to the Hindus against Muslim aggression in such specially affected areas as Noakhali, Pabna, Serajganj and Malda.

This Sabha calls upon the Hindus of Bengal to unite and organize in defence of their rights, liberties and culture under the banner of Hindu Mahasabha against the flagrant encroachments made thereon under the policy pursued by the present Ministry. This Sabha further calls upon the Hindus of India to stand by the Hindus of Bengal in their fight for the maintenance of their just rights and interests.

9. Scheduled Castes

(Moved from the Chair)

In the event of the repeal of the Poona Pact special provision should be made for the protection of the rights and interests of the Scheduled Castes and other Hindu backward classes guaranteeing their special representation in the legislatures for a sufficient but limited time.

10. Social Programme

(Moved from the Chair)

Whereas it is expedient to place before the Hindu nation a clear-cut and well defined social programme, it is hereby resolved that the Hindus, whether residing in or out of British India, being one entire whole, immediate steps be taken

- (a) to establish contact with Hindu masses;
- (b) to quicken, by means of propaganda or otherwise, this sense of oneness amongst all the sections of the Hindus;
- (c) to establish feelings of equality and fraternity amongst all the Hindus;
- (d) to remove untouchability in all forms or shapes in public life; and
- (e) to free all Hindus from social evils and views.

11. Hindu Sangathan

(Moved by Sjt B.C. Chatterjee)

The Mahasabha declares that the Hindu *Sagathan* and *Shuddhi* movement is a vital necessity for the strengthening and consolidation of the Hindus of India; and that in carrying on the work of such *Sangathan*, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the following:

- (a) The encouragement at physical culture among Hindu youths by the formation of Gymnastic clubs, *Akharas*, etc. and the creation of Hindu volunteer organizations all over the countryside whose main duty will be the defence of Hindu women and children and

temples and the protection of the Hindu community in general whenever threatened from any quarter.

- (b) The economic uplift of the Hindus and the encouragement of co-operation among the Hindus in the matter of trade, industry, commerce and agriculture.
- (c) The social uplift of Hindu backward classes in the shape of the removal of civic and political disabilities and social odium, the rapid spread of mass education among them by providing them with special scholarships and grants and other facilities and the promotion among them of a spirit of self-reliance and self-respect.
- (d) The removal of the spirit of jealousy and separatism as between different provinces and different sections of the Hindu community.
- (e) The reclamation of people who for some reasons had gone out of the Hindu community and their readmittance into the Hindu fold by the processes of *Shuddhi*.

12. Hindu Militia

(Moved by Dr B.S. Moonje)

In view of the fact that no less a person than Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India, has indirectly encouraged the Muslims to regard themselves as having more relations beyond the frontiers of India;

that prominent leaders of the Moslem League such as Fazlul Huq, the Premier of Bengal, has threatened actual revolt and civil war if the Indian constitution is not drafted to their entire satisfaction;

that the Moslems are organizing and training bands of militia of their own such as the Khaksars who have given so much trouble to the Congress Government of UP that it had to approach Mr Jinnah in compromising with them practically on their own terms;

the Hindu Mahasabha hereby resolves to form a volunteer corps of its own and under the name of Hindu Militia and calls upon all the Hindus between the ages of 18 and 45 to enlist themselves forthwith as soldiers of the Hindu Militia on the system of voluntary conscription; it further calls upon the Provincial Hindu Sabhas to take up the work of the organization of the Hindu Militia in their respective Provinces immediately and earnestly.

It further calls upon all existing Hindu volunteer corps to come under a common central organization of the Hindu Mahasabha. The Mahasabha appoints a committee to organize the Hindu Militia and draft a constitution for the same.

13. Minorities Question

(Moved by Dr B.S. Moonje)

1. That Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and non co-operation and the agitation and activities based on them, since Mahatma Gandhi assumed dictatorial powers in the Congress, has in actual practice proved a complete failure, both in respect of bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity and of hastening the advent of Swaraj; that on the contrary the policy of Mahatma Gandhi has so widened the gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims that there appears to be no practical chance of bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity in the near future.

2. That Mr Jinnah has spurned with arrogance all attempts of the Congress to approach him for negotiating and has now demanded a Royal Commission for investigation into his allegations of grievances against the Congress Ministries which he regards as no better than a Hindu organization.

3. That on occasions of riots and revolts, such as were witnessed only a month ago in the districts of Sukkur and Shikarpur, it is the Muslims who are invariably the aggressors and starters of such head-breaking, whether they form the minority or the majority community in any provinces; and

4. That the Muslims have been made much of both by the Congress and the Government and have been given concessions at the expense of the Hindus, constitutional and administrative, much more than what are their due in their proportion to the population;

In view of these facts and others which need no mention here, the Mahasabha hereby declares:

- (a) that there is no justification whatever for the appointment of the Royal Commission; but
- (b) that, if the Commission is to be appointed, then the Commission's terms of reference should also include
 - (i) investigation into the various acts of oppression and atrocities committed by the Muslims on the Hindus in both the Muslim majority and the Muslim minority provinces and
 - (ii) investigation into the Hindu grievances of various kinds of injustice, religious sacrilege, such as the throwing away of Hindu deities unceremoniously by the Police and Magistracy of Begu Sarai (Bihar) after they were left by the Hindus on the public road, being attacked by the Muslims at village Lakhminia on 22 October 1939, and several acts of the Congress's of commission and omission with the object of placating the Muslims:
 - (iii) That the Muslim League is playing into the hands of the British bureaucracy and supporting the diplomacy of British statesmen for delaying the advent of democratic freedom in India and therefore it deserves condemnation.
 - (iv) That the whole question of minorities should forthwith be referred to the League of Nations, of which India is a member.

14. War and Defence

(Moved by Sjt C.M. Saptarshi)

In view of the statement made by His Majesty's Government that it has declared the War with a desire to safeguarding the vital principles of Freedom and Democracy as against the rule of Force and in view of the fact that nowhere is there greater necessity for the application of these principles than in India, the Mahasabha declares:

That as the task of defending India from any military attack is the common concern of England and India, and as India is unfortunately not in a position today to carry out that responsibility unaided, there is ample room for wholehearted co-operation between India and England and that, in order to make such co-operation effective, His Majesty's Government should immediately, take steps

- (a) to introduce responsible government at the Centre;
- (b) to redress the grievous wrong done to the Hindus by the Communal Award, both at the Centre and in the provinces particularly in Bengal and the Punjab where the Hindus have been reduced to the position of a fixed statutory minority, contrary to all principles of democracy, with representation in the Legislatures reduced far below what they are entitled to even on the basis of their population strength;
- (c) in order to inspire the people of India to feel that the Indian army is the National Army of the people of India and not an Army of occupation of the British, to remove all artificial distinctions between the so-called 'listed' and 'non-enlisted' classes or 'martial'

and 'non-martial' races, and to accomplish the complete Indianization of the Indian Army as early as possible;

- (d) to modify the Indian Arms Act, so as to bring it on a par with what prevails in England;
- (e) to expand on an extensive scale the Indian Territorial Force and the University Training Corps, to establish such military organizations in provinces where they are not in existence at present, and to increase substantially the admission of cadets at the Indian Military Academy;
- (f) to make adequate arrangements for the training of the people in all branches of the Defence Force so as to make it ready for all emergencies.

15. On Independence

(Moved from the Chair)

The Hindu Mahasabha re-affirms Complete Independence as the goal of India's political aspirations, and urges that a constitution based upon the Dominion Status as defined in the statute of Westminster be immediately conferred on India.

The Mahasabha emphatically protests against the recent pronouncements of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State to the effect that the further constitutional progress of India must depend upon a solution of its communal and minority problems, since they flagrantly violate the fundamental principles of a democratic constitution resting ultimately upon the vote of the political party commanding a majority and not subjected to the veto of the minorities.

16. Fundamental Rights

(Moved from the Chair)

The Mahasabha declares that all the citizens of India, whether male or female, whether residing in or outside British India, are entitled to the following fundamental rights:

1. Every citizen of India has the right to a decent standard of living.
2. Every citizen has the right to free and compulsory primary education, and to all facilities in respect of liberal education.
3. Every citizen has the right to defend India against foreign aggression, and in consequence to bear arms and to be adequately educated in all the arms of the Army, Navy or Air Force.
4. Every citizen has the right to enjoy freedom of conscience and to freely profess and practise his or her religion and social customs and usages, subject to public peace, order and morality and subject to similar rights of other citizens.
5. Every citizen has the right to protection by the State of his or her religion, language, script and culture.
6. Every citizen has the right of free association and free expression for purposes not opposed to law or morality.
7. All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of considerations of religion, caste, creed or sex.
8. No disability shall attach to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment or office.
9. No citizen shall be deprived of his or her life, limb, liberty or property save in the due process of law.
10. Every citizen has the right to follow any lawful trade or calling and for that purpose to reside in any part of India and to claim the protection of law.

17. Provincial Boundaries

(Moved from the Chair)

The Mahasabha is of the opinion that the provincial boundaries have not been fixed on the natural basis of affinities of race, language, culture, customs and usages, and demands that there should be redistribution of provincial boundaries on this basis and the matter be considered by the Working Committee of the Mahasabha and the report be submitted within six months from the date.

18. Census

(Moved from the Chair)

The Mahasabha calls upon all Hindus to take the utmost care in securing a correct record of their numbers and to offer all possible co-operation in that regard to the Census authorities.

19. Cattle Wealth

(Moved from the Chair)

That the Mahasabha calls upon the Government to adopt measures for the protection and amelioration of the condition of the cattle wealth of India by providing for the free pasture lands and in other ways.

20. Burial of Dead Bodies

The session also passed a resolution moved by the President noting the practice existing in parts of the country to bury the bodies of Hindus died in jails or hospitals, and urging on the authorities to discontinue the practice and to burn such bodies invariably in accordance with the Hindu custom.

¹ Sir Manmathanath Mukherjee (1874–1942); born in Nadia district; educated in Presidency College and Ripon College, Calcutta; turned a practicing Lawyer, and was appointed as a Judge in Calcutta High Court in 1921; became its Chief Justice in 1934 and was knighted in 1935; on retirement practiced Law in Patna High Court, and acted temporarily as a Law Member of the Government of India; wrote a number of law books; known for his scholarship in Hinduism, he sympathized with the causes of the Hindu Mahasabha.

² Bhopatkar, Laxman Balwant (1880–1960), also known as Annasaheb Bhopatkar; born in 1880 in Poona; passed his B.A. in 1900, M.A. in 1904 and LLB. in 1907; came in close contact with Lokamanya Tilak and was deeply influenced by him; started his career as a teacher, but later moved to legal practice; one of the founders of the Law college and Tilak Vidyapitha in 1921; elected several times to Poona Municipality and served as President of Poona District Congress Committee in 1923; took active part in Tilak's Home Rule Movement (1916); was a staunch advocate of Council entry and elected to Bombay Legislative Assembly in 1923 from the Swarajya Party; later imprisoned for 28 months in 1939 for participating in Bhavnagar satyagraha; founded the Anatha Hindu Mahila Ashram in Poona to help destitute women and supported widow remarriages; to promote physical culture among youth he established Maharashtra Mandal in 1924; later in his life, he espoused the cause of the Hindu Mahasabha; among his publications were translations of the *Lectures of Bipin Chandra Pal* (1905), *Swarajyachi Mimawja* (1916), *Congress and Law Assemblies* (1923), *Physical Culture* (1928), *Hindu Samaj Darshan* (1934).

117. Mr Savarkar's Address

Editorial, *Tribune*, 30 December 1939.

30 December 1939

It has a militant presidential address with which Mr V.D. Savarkar opened the proceedings of the twenty-first session of the Hindu Mahasabha in Calcutta on Thursday. The militancy is not only

intelligible but in part defensible as a natural reaction produced in sensitive Hindu minds by the aggressive communalism of the Muslim League. 'The anti-national and aggressive designs on the part of the Muslim minority,' says Mr Savarkar, 'constitutes a danger to all non-Muslim Indians in the country, and not to the Hindus alone. It is the anti-national attitude of the Muslim minority alone which is giving a handle to the British Government to obstruct further political and constitutional progress in Hindusthan.' Our only quarrel with this otherwise unexceptionable statement is, first, that it tars with the same brush all Muslims in disregard of the fact that a large section of the community is and has always been with the Congress and has never identified itself with the Muslim League and secondly that it ignores the vital fact that the anti-national and aggressive attitude of the separatist section and its organ, the Muslim League, is at least as harmful to the Muslim community itself as to all non-Muslim Indians. While we fully agree with Mr Savarkar that Christians, Jews, Parsis and other non-Muslim minorities should openly and definitely disown the League designs, we consider it incumbent upon all those Muslims who realize the dangers inherent in those designs both to their country and to their community to disown them equally openly and equally definitely.

But while we can both understand and appreciate the resentment produced in Mr Savarkar's mind by the aggressive communalism of the Muslim League, we feel no hesitation in saying that he went altogether beyond the limits of a legitimate protest in putting forward claims on behalf of his community which were just as aggressive and anti-national as the claims of the Muslim League. 'The Muslim minority in India,' he said, 'were fully entitled to and would have the right to be treated as equal citizens enjoying equal protection and civic rights in proportion to their population. The Hindu majority would not encroach upon the legitimate rights of any non-Hindu minority. But in no case would the Hindu majority resign its right which as a majority it was entitled to exercise under any democratic and legitimate constitution.' On the preceding day Mr Savarkar had laid down the same proposition in still more unequivocal terms. In his speech in laying the foundation stone of the Lajpat Rai Memorial Hall in Calcutta he said that 'democracy meant rule by the majority,' that 'it could not have a peculiar meaning in India,' and that 'India must be ruled by the majority and not by the minority.' If these words mean anything they mean that while the Muslims and other minorities are to have the same protection of the law as the majority and to have their fundamental religious and cultural rights guaranteed to them, it is the Hindus who, by virtue of their being the majority community, must have the ruling power and authority of the state vested in them. Need we say that a State composed in the manner in which Mr Savarkar would, the future State in India would not be a democracy but a negation of democracy? It is perfectly true that democracy means rule by the majority, but the majority is a political and, therefore, changeable majority and not a religious and, therefore, unchangeable majority.

Mr Savarkar is a great scholar, but it must be said with regret that he has not grasped the fundamental principle of democracy. That principle is that every man or woman in the territory covered by a State must be at once an equal subject and an equal participant in the sovereign authority of the State. The rule by a majority is a deduction from this fundamental principle, and not a substitute for it. Mr Savarkar's conception of democracy confers on the minorities the right to be treated as equal subjects, but reserves the sovereign right, the right to govern, only for an unchangeable religious majority; and consequently, so far as the exercise of political sovereignty goes, dooms all minorities to eternal serfdom. Not only is there no substantial difference between this position and that underlying the several Pakistan schemes, but the two positions are essentially complementary. Mr Savarkar, is, in fact supporting and justifying Mr Jinnah's statement that the Hindus and Muslims are two different nations, and that the principle of democracy as understood in the West is wholly inapplicable to India; and if we could believe for one moment that in this

matter he represents the views of the majority of his community we should have no choice except to despair of India's political future.

Happily not only is there no reason to believe that this part of Mr Savarkar's address represents the considered judgment of the Hindu community, but there is every reason to believe that it does not represent Mr Savarkar's own better judgment. This is clear from the advice he gave to the Congress in the same address. While requesting the Congress to observe 'a day of Rectification' in order to counteract the Muslim League's observance of 'the Day of Deliverance', he said: 'Let the Indian National Congress rectify its fundamental mistake and be once more the real Indian National Congress it claims to be. Let it be absolutely consistent with its own ideal of a territorial nationalism and begin with a clean state. Let it proclaim once for all that it stands by these principles alone. Firstly it recognizes no Muslim as a Muslim or Christian as a Christian or Hindu as a Hindu, but looks upon them all as and deals with them all as Indians only and will, therefore, have nothing to do with any special communal, religious or racial interests. Secondly, it does not acknowledge any constitutional principle with regard to electorates other than the rule "one man, one vote", public services to go by merit alone. Thirdly and above all, so long as such a national and just constitution could not be had, let the Congress resist the temptation of participating in any elections whatever under a constitution which is deliberately meant to divide the integrity of the Indian people, and is not only based on communal divisions but is most unjustly harmful to the majority community and constitutes a standing instigation to the Muslim minority to act against the nation as a whole.' Subject to one reservation to which we shall presently refer, this is a position with which all Indian nationalists will fully agree; and the most important thing to observe is that Mr Sarvarkar himself pledges his own whole-hearted support and that of the Hindu Mahasabha to the Congress in the event of its taking up the attitude. It evidently has not occurred to Mr Savarkar that this part of his address is wholly inconsistent with the claim he put forward on behalf of the Hindus to be the sole possessor of the governing power and authority in India by virtue of their being the majority community. There is the same contradiction in his advocacy of joint electorates for all communities and his strong condemnation of separate electorates. If the electorates are joint and freedom of vote is guaranteed, what is there to prevent the majority of seats in any Legislature or Cabinet being filled at a particular time by members of a religious minority? The only part of Mr Savarkar's advice to the Congress from which we dissent is that it should not participate in elections under the new constitution, because it embodies the vicious principle of separate electorates. Our advice to it on the contrary is that it should participate in all elections and should contest every seat reserved for every community. The policy suggested by Mr Savarkar can only make every Legislature in India a cock-pit for communal fights and thus perpetuate communalism. The mistake that the Congress made on the last occasion was that while it contested the overwhelming majority of general, that is, Hindu seats it contested only a few Muslim seats. It is that mistake which it should rectify at the next election.

118. A Poem on Arya Unity and 'The Divine Law'

Home (Political) File No. 272, 1939, Bihar State Archives.

[This is an English translation of a Hindi poem, written by Hari Charan Lal, a resident of Patna. The first edition was published in 1939. The poem precedes a pamphlet entitled 'The Divine Law'.]

The knowledge which all wise men ask for,
Give me also the same knowledge O God.
Always do good acts so that (you) may again get the body of a man,

Fortunate you are O Dear that you have got this auspicious occasion.
 Let all Hindu Arya unite now; the time has come
 To sacrifice body, wealth and mind for the sake of the nation.
 Let you organise yourselves soon, when you have owned the untouchables.
 Let you all become Kshatriyas at present, when you have arms.
 Prepare yourselves, save (your) religion, the (problem of) Hyderabad has cropped up.
 Everywhere parties of Muslims are ready to fight.
 If there is disunity even now, the Hindus will be effaced from the world.
 Dayanand was sent to you by God for instructing you.
 Always do good acts so that (you) may again get the body of a man.
 (In the margin)
 In every house, women will have to be instructed
 To kill those who enter the house.
 If they be afraid they shall have to lose not only
 their wealth but their honour also.
 Losing their chastity they shall have to weep, without wealth.

[Extract]

... If a man uses his reason he can be saved. Be he an animal or a man if he gives trouble he should be killed. Where the population of the Muhammadans is larger the Hindus are in trouble; where the Hindus command the majority the Muhammadans are happy. The Muhammadans instruct their boys that it is apparent for them to oppress, kill and convert the Hindu Kafirs to their religion. Hyderabad has a Muslim government; similar is the case with Bhopal, Dacca and other places. The Muhammadans always talk of their good and talk and discuss among themselves. They also purchase guns. The Hindus are sleeping senselessly. After the rule of the British, the Muhammadans would reign; for only that nation can reign which has arms and which is organized. The Hindus do not possess arms and are not organized; the community has been suffering from the bogey of untouchability which stands in the way of organization. There are some who are wise but they too follow the fools. A servant who has served his Hindu master for 50 years and has been very affectionately treated throughout will kill his master (without a remorse) on the occasion of communal quarrels. Not less that 17 times did Prithvi Raj release Muhammad Ghorī who punished Prithvi Raj the 18th time and did not release him. On the occasion of a Hindu-Muslim riot at Calcutta a Muhammadan entered the house of a Hindu Seth and requested him to save his life. The Seth was moved. He said when the Hindu rioters arrived there that he was his own man and a Hindu. When the Hindu (rioters) had departed, that Muhammadan killed the son of the Seth. Muhammad Ali or Shoukat Ali, fast friends of Mahatma Gandhi, said even the most degraded Muhammadan was better than Mahatma Gandhi. There may be a serious fight, some day between the Hindus and the Muhammadans. Small scuffles on a small scale are happening everywhere. Jinnah has been fanning the flame of communal fire (lit: inciting). The Hindus have been fast asleep. If the Hindus live in a Mohalla where the Muhammadans are in a majority, they will have to lose their wealth and life. Enmity and animosity is on the increase. Something is sure to happen. If the Hindus take care they will be saved. If not they will have to lose more as compared to the Muhammadans. How can (they) be careful? Only when all—wealth, men and mind are united as one. The Muhammadans and the Christians do good to their country and their nation. For the good of Turkey the Muhammadans raised a subscription from the Hindus and sent the sum to Turkey. The Christians raised donation from the Hindus in the German war and sent the sum out of this country. The Hindus do not give for the help of the Hindus. It is to be greatly regretted. On

the occasion of the Earthquake the Muhammadans received free gift of money raised from the Hindus. The Hindus remained poor, unemployed, hungry and naked but they did not get any service. Men belonging to other faiths got employment. The Rajas and the Maharajas spend their wealth by inviting prostitutes and others. The Nizam of Hyderabad has been increasing the number of his religious Moulvi preachers. In the *Tabligh*, he spends money in helping the Muhammadans and giving them employment. In Bhopal a very large number of Hindus were converted to the Muhammadan faith; and if the present state of affairs continue the Hindus residing in the Muhammadan kingdoms will be converted to Muhammadanism. The good things of the Muhammadans become known to all of their co-religionists from one to another; but the Hindus do not propagate even their good acts and this is the reason why they are beaten. The Muhammadans do not fear death. The Hindus are afraid of death. The very day the Hindus also do not fear death, the Muhammadans will see their end. They will sleep happily. There is no quarrel with the Christians. The real quarrel is with the Muhammadans. The Christians are wise. They are just waiting for the day when the Hindus would become wise and they would go away after making over the charge to them. They are not going away only because the 25 crores of Hindus are not organized. The Hindus alone are slaves of the Christians as well as of the Muhammadans. The day on which the Hindus would like to end their slavery, eight lakhs of the Christians will go back to their homes; and eight crores of the Muhammadans will die without being killed. The Muhammadan officers help their co-religionists. The Hindus, in service, being afraid of the Government, help the Muhammadans alone and suppress their co-religionists. A Muhammadan never cares for his service, he helps his co-religionists. A Hindu cares for his service and does not help his co-religionists. Government notices this foolishness and says that they are not fit even now. They shall be fit only when they would conquer the eight crores of the Muhammadans. Government says that it would go of its own accord and that it only helps the Hindus; because if it had not remained the *teek* (tuft of hair left at the back of the head), the sacred thread, *tilak* (mark on the forehead), temple and the daughters and daughter-in-laws of the Hindus would have become extinct. Have you forgotten the age of Aurangzeb? Look to the Nizam of Hyderabad even to day. A Muhammadan rules there even though the population consists of 89 per cent of the Hindus. There is no organization among you. Even if the selfish 56 lakhs of Sadhus among you organize themselves, there would be no trace of the eight crores of the Muhammadans. The Brahmans, the Pandas, and the Pujaris have sown disunity among you. The foolish *Jajman* and the disciples have even now been feeding them. If they are respected in this way why should they care for engaging themselves in battle. Giving up luxury even a Muhammadan Faqir wants the success of his community. The prostitutes, the *churiharins*, *Maniharins*, Hakims, Doctors, Vakils, Barrister, Officers, Nawabs, and Kings, all are imbued with the spirit to convert the Hindus to Muhammadanism, by every means, by hook or by crook. When all would become Muhammadans there would be no quarrel. The foolish Hindus say that they are like oceans and that there would be no deficit whatever they lose. These foolish men have never looked to the Census Report. From 33 crores they came down to 22 crores. On account of *Suddhi* and Sangathan their number has now risen up to 26 crores. On account of the oppressions and tyranny of the Muhammadans if the Hindu Arya do not work unitedly their number would further come down from 25 crores. A handful of Aryas against 8 crores cannot do any thing specially when even among them the number of true Aryas is very small and the number of false Aryas is very large. If there had been no false Aryas and only the true Aryas had remained they would have made the Muhammadans extinct. The false Aryas are a source of troubles to the true Aryas also. Being afraid of caste differences and disregarding the teachings of Swami Dayanand Ji, God who is just, has to them, become sinful and mad. God had sent Swamiji for the uplift of the Hindu nation.

Listening to good things and not acting according to those instructions (one) becomes deaf. Credit alone is the life of business. If a man of no means commands credit in the market he is not worth even a penny. Credit means repayment of dues before demand. It is honourable to pay at once when a demand is made and it is disgraceful to refuse to pay when a demand is made. However villainous an enemy may be, he would be certainly better than the foreigners. O Ye, cow-sacrificing persons just think within yourselves, you kill yourselves and eat yourselves. If killed by God it would become forbidden (lit. *Haram*). The great man have made the country poor. At first, people attached much importance to gaining strength, because in that case the demon could not oppress them and they would be no victims to diseases or indigestion. There was happiness always. In the beginning people had faith in God; because when God is the protector no body can oppress. If evil acts are not done there can be no trouble. If we will not do ill to others we will not make any enemy. How can a man develop his strength? By exercise, by taking nutritious diets, by marrying after 36 years of age and then producing children. The child must be educated from its very inception in matters of religion and bravery. On attaining eight years of age he should be sent to Gurukul, when he becomes 36 years old he should be married. When a girl is 6 she should be sent to the Girls' school, where she would be trained till her 20th year and then married. If this becomes the order of the day the whole world will tremble at such men and women. Who cares for what, Swami Dayanandji said? We see what the Christians and the Mohammadans have been doing; they have been increasing their number by conversion from the Hindus. When the Arya Samajists take others within their fold by *Shuddhi* and thus swell their number, the Hindus alone obstruct them. Men and women are but physical forms. Life is the same as also food. The clothes are different. Both possess strength and wisdom equally. How have women killed a number of Rakshas? If you strike terror into the hearts of the children they would become weak; so this practice is bad. The Hindus did not treat the Muhammadans badly; while the latter have always treated the former badly. The Hindus should explain their (Muhammadan) bad point in the meetings of their (Hindus) national panchayats so that Hindu boys and girls might be careful. They should neither take from nor give to the Muhammadans without fight. They would starve. The Muhammadans have become careful; they have begun opening all sorts of shops. Even now if they do not take from nor give to, still their number of the Hindu including the untouchables is 25 crores. The number of the Muhammadans is 8 crores. One against every three. They hold consultations in the mosques and kill the Hindus. If the seven crores of untouchables join Muhammadanism the number of the latter would become 15 crores. If eight crores are taken out from 25 crores, the balance would be only seventeen crores and then all the Hindus would be killed.

The Hindus neither lack strength, nor wealth, nor wisdom, nor number, they lack only organization. The very day a Hindu will help a Hindu, all will be happy. The high should mix with the low; the low should listen to what the high say and then the high would help them with money and then there would be victory!

Swami Dayanand came, below the trumpet of the *Vedas* and awakened those sleeping.

God! give me strength, devotion and the skill to reform the country.

119. The Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Yuvak Sabha: Constitution, Objects and Rules

All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-22, NMML.

The constitution was adopted in December 1939 at Nagpur and published at the Yuvak Sabha printing press at Delhi in 1939. Only the first four pages of the 19 pages Constitution is reproduced here:

‘Who is a Hindu?’

A Hindu means a person, who regards this Land of Bharatvarsha, from the Indus to the Seas, as his Father-Land as well as his Holy-land.’

Name

1. This Association shall be called the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Yuvak Sabha with its head office at Delhi.

Aim

2. The aim of the A.B. Hindu Yuvak Sabha is, the protection and promotion of all that contributes to the advancement, strength and glory of the Hindu Rashtra—Hindu Race, Hindu Culture and Hindu Polity—and as a means to that end, the attainment of Poorna Swarajya—that is absolute political Independence for Hindustan by all proper and legitimate means.

Objects

3. The objects of the A.B. Hindu Yuvak Sabha are:
 - (a) To organize and consolidate all sections of the Hindu youth into one organic whole;
 - (b) To protect and promote Hindu interests whenever and wherever necessary;
 - (c) To remove untouchability and generally to ameliorate and improve the condition of the so-called depressed classes amongst the Hindus;
 - (d) To revive and promote the glorious ideals of Hindu womanhood;
 - (e) To promote cow-protection;
 - (f) To improve the physique of the Hindu youngmen and promote martial spirit amongst them by establishing military schools and organizing volunteer corps;
 - (g) To reclaim all those who have left the Hindu fold and welcome others into the Hindu fold;
 - (h) To found orphanages and rescue homes for orphans and homeless women;
 - (i) Generally to take steps for promoting religious, educational, social, economic and political interests and rights of the Hindu youngmen;
 - (j) To promote good feelings between the Hindus and non-Hindu communities in Hindustan, and to act in a friendly way with them with a view to evolve a united and self-governing Bharateeya Nation based on equality of civic rights and duties irrespective of caste and creed.

Note: The A.B. Hindu Yuvak Sabha shall not side or identify itself or interfere with or oppose any particular sect or sects of the Hindu community in respect of its religious practices amongst themselves in so far as they do not infringe on the fundamental civil liberties of others.

Membership

4. Every Hindu young man who is above 14 years of age and accepts in writing the aims and objects of the A.B. Hindu Yuvak Sabha, becomes a member of the A.B. Hindu Yuvak Sabha on payment of annas four a year.

Definition of Hindu

A Hindu means a person who regards the land of Bharatvarsha from the Sindhu to the Seas as his Father-land as well as his Holyland, i.e., professes any religion of Bharatiya origin including Vaidikism, Sanatanism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Arya Samaj or Brahmo Samaj.

III. SHIAS AND SUNNIS

120. The All India Shia Political Conference

Indian Annual Register, Vol. 2, 1939, p. 355.

Annual Session, Chapra, 29 to 31 January 1939

Demand for Joint Electorates

The three-day sitting of the All India Shia Political Conference concluded on the 31st January 1939 after passing a number of resolutions including one expressing its intention to keep itself aloof both from the Congress and Muslim League and another demanding the introduction of joint electorates and the abolition of separate electorates. The Conference was presided by Mr Kalb-e-Abbas.

The resolution on the decision to dissociate itself from the Congress and the Muslim League evoked much discussion. Mr Jaffar Hassain, General Secretary of the Conference, withdrew from the debate because, in his opinion, it was 'harmful' for the Shia community to keep itself aloof from the Congress. The resolution adopted reads as follows:

'This session of the All-India Shia Political Conference considers as its ideal a constitution of freedom in which the rights of all the Indian minorities, especially those of the Shia community, may be effectively safeguarded. This session considers it necessary to champion all movements based on nationalism and patriotism launched by any political party. But as the critical period of the political evolution through which India is passing at the present moment is manifest and as manifold events bear testimony to the fact that the political and religious interests of the Shia minority are in jeopardy and the manner in which these rights are being trodden over is unparalleled, in the circumstance, when the life of the Shia community is in danger and when neither party—either the Congress or the Muslim League—is doing justice to the Shias nor is protecting their rights in the opinion of this Conference, the Shias have no practical alternative left but to strengthen their political organization internally from the platform of the Shia Political Conference and to keep themselves aloof as a community both from the Congress and the Muslim League.'

'It is also necessary in the opinion of the Conference to make it clear that the Muslim League which has always trampled upon the feelings and susceptibilities of the Shia minority, claiming in the same breath to be the only representative body of the Muslims of India, is utterly wrong in its pretension because in so far as the Shias are concerned, as a sect they have never considered the Muslim League be their representative and they declare that any pact in which the Muslim League enters into with other bodies without consulting the Shia Political Conference will not be binding on the Shias of India.'

The Conference reiterated its faith in joint electorates with 'such reservation and weightage that exist today in the different provinces' and demanded the abolition of separate electorates.

Resolutions urging on the UP Government to cancel the punitive tax which was being levied from the Shias at Lucknow, to rescind their communiqués of 11 November, 1938, and to withdraw as early as possible all pending cases against eight Shias in the Benares Camp Jail were also adopted.

The Conference expressed its sympathy with the Shia sufferers of the Anatolia earthquake.

That the Governor of the various provinces should exercise their special powers for the protection of the minorities in respect of the Shia community and that the Shias be 'protected from being trampled upon', is one of the eight demands for 'safeguarding the rights' of the Shias formulated by the Foundation Committee of the All India Shia Conference held under the presidency of the Maharaj Kumar of Mahmudabad at Chapra.

The demands will be placed for consideration before the All-Parties Conference to be held at Lucknow.

Other 'demands' dealt with the rights and representation of Shias in the Provincial Legislatures, Cabinets and local bodies and safeguarding the religious and social rights of the community.

121. The Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy: Jasbir Singh to
G.M. Harper, 10 February 1939

General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 65, Box 607, Uttar Pradesh State Archives. All the reports, unless otherwise stated, are drawn from the same source.

Immediate & Confidential

D.O. No. 66-0.R.

My dear Harper,

The possibility of the Madh-e-Sahaba controversy being resuscitated in Lucknow again grows stronger every day. The Tahafuz-e-Millat (a Sunni association) has applied for permission to take out small processions all over the city from the 12th to the 19th. The processionists will dissuade Sunnis by word of mouth and by posters from doing *taziadari*. On previous occasions some Sunnis raised the slogan that *taziadari* was *haram*. In consequence much excitement was caused amongst Shias and great bitterness of feeling ensued.

The Tanzim-ul-Momnin, a militant Shia organization, are desirous of taking out a procession on the 17th February and propose to hold a public meeting thereafter at the Amin-ud Doula Park when the Shia flag will be hoisted. The date selected is the one on which Hazrat Umar was murdered by one Abu Lulu Firoz, and some Sunnis are definitely of the opinion that the procession and the public meeting in question are being held largely in order to indirectly rejoice over the death of the second Khalifa.

Both of these proposals are such as to increase excitement amongst the members of the Shia and Sunni communities and to exacerbate bitterness of feeling.

I am trying to persuade the Shias to change the date of their proposed procession and public meeting or to have only a meeting on the 17th February. I am also endeavouring to persuade the Sunnis to abandon their proposed processions or to have them in a certain area only where practically no Shias are residing. The times are such that I am not confident of success. If my efforts fail we should have to consider the question of banning the proposed processions.

The Sunnis are laying considerable stress on the fact that Government promised in a public communiqué to pass final orders on the Madh-e-Sahaba controversy in case the Shias and Sunnis failed to come to an amicable settlement amongst themselves. My views in the matter have been submitted to you and Government, and I respectfully venture to submit that the promise made by Government should be adhered to. It is for Government to decide what their final decision should be, and in this connection I would again ask for a consideration of the proposal to remove the three days' definite ban on the public recital of the Madh-e-Sahaba and to leave the proposition as to whether the ban should be employed on one or every day of each year, to the District Magistrate. It is rumoured that Maulana Hasan Ahmad Madani¹ has given his blessing to the Sunnis embarking on civil disobedience during the coming Moharrum, and I have heard it said that the Maulana Saheb has agreed to offer himself for arrest should the need arise. The civil disobedience movement would receive a strong impetus if the Maulana Saheb courted arrest, but if the three days' ban were removed it is certainly possible that the movement would lose favour with the Sunni masses. I have stated before and reiterate that if even one public recital of the Madh-e-Sahaba in procession

is allowed serious rioting between Shias and Sunnis is certain to ensue. It is true that the Shias will not welcome a decision regarding the removal of the three days' ban, as they feel that an order of this nature does away with a right which has been theirs since 1909 or so. In actual fact, however, a decision to this effect would be of little practical value, as the ban can, if necessary, be enforced by the District Magistrate at any time during a year, and there have been occasions when it was not employed on one or other of the three days and there was no public recital of the Madh-e-Sahaba.

Yours sincerely,

¹ Maulana Husain Ahmed Madani (1879–1957); son of Syed Habibullah of Tanda in the district Faizabad of UP; his father is said to have participated in the First War of Indian Independence in 1857; received early education from his father; in 1892 he joined the Deoband School for higher religious education; in 1911–12 he accompanied a group of revolutionaries to Kabul to plan a revolt against the British Government. The effort could not succeed and the Maulana was arrested and jailed in 1914. After his release assumed the leadership of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-I Hind in 1919. He participated in the Congress movements and courted arrest a number of times. He was opposed to the two-nation theory and the demand for Pakistan.

122. Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper, 13 March 1939, D.O. 141-C.R.

*Dy Commissioner's House
Lucknow
13 March 1939*

My dear Harper,

I have written and told you in another D.O. that 421 persons had been arrested up till 12.3.39 on account of the public recitation of the Madh-e-Sahaba. The Ahrars are holding a meeting at the Tila mosque today and are making efforts to persuade at least 50 persons to court arrest. Moreover, excitement amongst Sunnis in connection with the civil disobedience movement is on the increase and jathas have come in from other districts in the province. Some persons from Delhi, Meerut and Peshawar have already gone to jail or are likely to do so in the near future....

The Shias refused this morning to go through the Pata Nala unless the restrictions made under the Police Act were withdrawn. Eventually the organizers assured the City Magistrate and the Dy SP City that if the restrictions were not enforced they would do nothing unusual and on this assurance the Shia processionists were allowed to go through the Pata Nala. It has since been reported that some of the Shias, who belong to the Wazirganj area, did not keep to the promises made and deliberately repeated in front of the Dar-ul-Muballaghin a certain line from a verse which when said by itself is calculated to injure the feelings of Sunnis. It has been decided therefore to take action under Sec. 107 CrPC against offenders. Apart from this incident the Ashura passed off peacefully though some Sunnis were arrested during different times of the day in various parts of the city for publicly reciting the Madh-e-Sahaba.

I stated in my fortnightly D.O. dated 24.2.1939 that up till then the response to the call for civil disobedience by Sunnis in connection with the Madh-e-Sahaba controversy had not been good. The public recitation of the Madh-e-Sahaba by Sunnis in various parts of the city has naturally caused an appreciable amount of excitement and as no action has been taken against the Shias thus far, uneducated Sunnis are becoming more and more inclined towards the view that it is time to follow the advice of their Maulvis.

The Muslim League is either powerless or unable to control the Muslim masses in this matter. The Ahrars are likely to join in the civil disobedience movement. Whether Sunni Jathas will come

to Lucknow from other districts in the province is not definitely known as yet, but it is generally stated that Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani will do his best to see that the residents of Lucknow are given outside help. Meanwhile, the strain that has been imposed for an appreciable time on the police and the magistracy continues, and no one knows from hour to hour—let alone from day to day—what will happen next.

123. Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper, 18 March 1939 D.O. 155-C.R.

*Dy Commissioner's House
Lucknow
18 March 1939*

My dear Harper,

Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani arrived quietly in Lucknow yesterday. He proceeded soon after his arrival to the Tila mosque where he took part in the Friday prayers.

There was an audience of about 10,000 Sunni Muslims and very considerable excitement prevailed. The Maulana Sahib made a short speech in which he exhorted Sunnis to continue the civil disobedience movement in connection with the Madh-e-Sahaba controversy till all their demands had been satisfied. He added that this movement would not be confined to Lucknow alone but would be started in many other places in this and other provinces where Congress was in power. He expressed the hope that a large number of persons would offer themselves for arrest. Actually 357 persons publicly recited the Madh-e-Sahaba and were arrested.

Presumably Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani will now discuss the situation with Government and it is stated that if a settlement, acceptable to him, is not arrived at he will probably offer himself for arrest. When he does so excitement amongst Sunnis will be greater than ever and it is rumoured that a thousand persons or even more will insist on following the Maulana Sahib to jail on the day of his arrest....

May I respectfully request that Government give us a clear indication at once of the policy which they propose to follow in regard to this unfortunate controversy? Apart from the fact that we would then know how and when to take action, the position that the Sunnis and Shias would have to face would be clearer to them than it is at present. The Sunnis feel just now that as their movement has gained and is gaining unexpected strength and as Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, who holds an important position in Congress circles, is backing them whole-heartedly they are likely to get their way to an appreciable extent, at least with Government. For the same reasons the Shias have the fear that their cause will not meet with Government support. In consequence feelings between the two communities are extremely tense and it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the public tranquility in Lucknow City.

There is another point which calls for the immediate attention of Government. As you are aware Maulanas Abdul Shakoor, Zafar-ul-Mulk and certain other Sunni leaders were arrested under Sec. 107 CrPC before they actually recited the Madh-e-Sahaba in public. It was considered advisable to adopt this course of action as otherwise there would have been a great danger of a breach of the peace occurring and these gentlemen had openly incited Sunnis to do an act which was calculated to disturb the public tranquility. The question then arises as to what action we should take in regard to Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani whose position now is exactly similar to that in which Maulanas Abdul Shakoor and Zafar-ul-Mulk were placed. As he is greatly respected by many people and occupies a high position in the Congress we do not want to do anything which is likely to embarrass Government. I therefore request that I may kindly be given due

directions in the matter. I would point out in this connection that if a settlement is not arrived at and the Maulana Sahib openly declares his intention of courting arrest we shall be running a grave risk of a fierce Shia-Sunni riot breaking out or a clash between the police and Sunnis occurring or both, if we do not follow the procedure adopted in the cases of Maulanas Abdul Shakoor and Zafar-ul-Mulk.

124. Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper, 24 March 1939, D.O. 168-C.R.

*Dy Commissioner's House
Lucknow
24 March 1939*

My dear Harper,

Tension in the city between Shias and Sunnis has increased and is now nearing breaking point. The day before yesterday evening and yesterday in the morning and afternoon batches of Shia boys publicly recited the Tabarra in the City. Some of them fled before the police arrived on the scene; a few were arrested. The general opinion is that some members of the Tanzeem-ul-Momineen are at the bottom of this particular action. It is not easy to prove that this is the case but if fairly good evidence can be procured the persons who are responsible will be prosecuted under Sec. 117 IPC or Sec. 107 CrPC.

Public recital of the Tabarra caused much excitement amongst Sunnis but their leaders, realizing to the full that a riot would hamper the civil disobedience movement very greatly, have so far been able to keep their followers under control.

Meanwhile the Sunni civil disobedience movement goes from strength to strength. Jathas are coming in from other places in the province and from other provinces as well. The usual meeting will be held after today's Friday afternoon prayers at the Tila mosque and in all probability a very large number of persons will offer themselves for arrest.

The Sunni leaders of the movement who reside in Lucknow, the Ahrars and the Shias have all passed resolutions to the effect that they are not prepared to accept any settlement that may be arrived at through the agency of the Muslim League. Whether this body is really anxious to do something in the matter or are going to rest content after passing a pious resolution at the Muslim League Conference held at Gorakhpur recently remains to be seen.

If nothing untoward occurs today, Sunday the 26th will give us all considerable anxiety as the Ashra-Sani occurs on this date. The Shias will take out a procession through the Pata Nala and if they behave in an irresponsible and irritating manner as they did on the Ashra a clash may occur.

All possible precautions and efforts are being taken and made to prevent a breach of the public tranquility but there is such bitterness of feeling between the two communities that it is impossible to be hopeful about the future.

125. Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper, 4 April 1939, D.O. 190-C.R.

*Dy Commissioner's House
Lucknow
4 April 1939*

My dear Harper,

Conditions in the city appear to be easier today. I make this statement because members of both Muslim communities have approached me and suggested the lifting of the Curfew Order or

its extension up to 9 p.m. My experience is that such suggestions are made when people genuinely feel that danger to life and property is lessening appreciably. The curfew time has been extended upto 8 p.m. but I do not propose to make a further change till next Friday is over.

2. The civil disobedience movement has been called off by the Sunnis and I sincerely hope that members of this community will not commit the grave error of assembling in large numbers at the Tila mosque for their next Friday prayers. They ought not to do so as the Shias are bound to court arrest on this date from the Asaf-ud-daula Imambara and no Sunnis should deliberately go to a place where he is certain to hear the recital of the Tabarra. I understand that Sunni leaders are making every effort to persuade members of their community to remain absolutely peaceful. Now that the Sunni civil disobedience movement has been called off the main reason for exercising restraint has gone. But even so, there are signs that the great majority of Sunnis are desirous of avoiding a disturbance of the public tranquility. They know that we are prepared for any such eventuality and the curfew order is already proving irksome.

126. 'Tabarra is Not Abused': 93 Shias Court Arrest on Thursday

National Herald, 8 April 1939.

*Lucknow
Thursday*

'Tabarra recitation is being very wrongly interpreted as abusing, it is not so. It is merely an expression of resentment,' said Mr Asad Ullah Asad, editor of a local Urdu daily, addressing a largely attended meeting held in connection with the Shia agitation at Imam Bara Asaf-ud-Doullah on Thursday.

The speaker emphasized that there was no nation in the world which did not believe in Tabarra. When Bacha-e-Saqqa usurped the kingdom of Afghanistan, the Muslims in Peshawar and the Punjab erected his effigies and spat on it and burnt it. That was no more than 'Tabarra' at Bacha-e-Saqqa. In Germany, too photographs of the Kaiser were torn and burnt—that too was Tabarra against the Kaiser. Similarly, the Shias had the right of observing that method against those whom they considered to be at the root of the massacre of the Prophet's grandson and his family. If the Shias did not express resentment against the 'enemies of Hazrat Ali' publicly so far it was because of their brotherly affection for the Sunni community.

Among those who addressed the gathering were Messrs Ali-Zaher, Agha Mehdi and Afsar Husain Vakil. The meeting started with the recitation of the Quran and poems by two Muslims and a Hindu.

After the meeting, 93 persons came out in groups reciting Tabarra and courted arrest, which included besides some Nawabs of Lucknow, Mr Mahomed Naqi, Jathas from Fyzabad, Ayodhya, Unao, Zaidpur, Bara Banki, Agra, Rae Bareli and the Punjab. So far over a thousand Shias have gone to jail.

127. Hundred Arrests in City: Eighth Day of Tabarra Agitation

National Herald, 9 April 1939.

*Lucknow
Friday*

One of the largest gatherings assembled in the Imam Bara Asaf-ud-Daullah when, for the eighth day, the Tabarra agitation was continued by the Shias.

Batches of agitators emerged out in quick succession and the total number of arrests reached 591 for the day. Theologians, Nawabs and men of high status prominently figured among those arrested.

As the result of the local Hindu Sabha's sympathy with the Shias, large number of prominent Hindus were also present in the Imam Bara.

Starting from the morning, right till the evening groups of Shias came out reciting Tabarra and courted arrest. The first batch was led by Mr Syed Mahomed, son of Maulana Allama-i-Hindi.

It is learnt that over 35,000 Shias from different places have intimated their desire to come to Lucknow and join the agitation.

128. Stray Assaults in Lucknow: Dispute Over Madh-e-Sahaba

National Herald, 11 April 1939.

Lucknow
Monday

The Madh-e-Sahaba Tabarra controversy in Lucknow took a serious turn on Sunday when following three cases of stray assaults, two near Aish Bagh and one near Thawai Tolla, the curfew was stiffened and about one hundred persons were arrested for violating the same. It is not yet certain whether the third case which occurred near Thawai Tolla, was the outcome on the inter-sectarian tension.

The authorities took prompt action and placed police pickets at strategic posts. The patrol of armed police was strengthened and a number of persons have been put under arrest in connection with the assaults.

The situation is perfectly under control.

The victims of the assaults near Aishbagh were taken to the Medical College where they are progressing satisfactorily.

The curfew which was previously relaxed has again been extended and now its timings are from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m.

On the other hand, the Tabarra agitation was again continued, and following a meeting of Shias, members of the community courted arrest reciting Tabarra. Total arrests made on Sunday came to 118.

It is understood that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is taking an active part in bringing about a rapprochement between the Shias and Sunnis of Lucknow. A deputation of five Shias, consisting Mr Hyder Mehdi,¹ Chairman of the Improvement Trust of Allahabad, Mr Kalb-e-Abbas,² MLC, Syed Ali Zaheer,³ MLA, Mr Afsar Hussain, Vakil, and Mr Jafar Hussain, Secretary of the All India Shia Political Conference, waited on Pandit Nehru and laid before him the grievances of their community. Pandit Nehru reportedly, assured the deputationists that he would try his best to bring about a rapprochement over the matter.

¹ Syed Hyder Mehdi: Shia leader from Allahabad, education B.A., LLB., a leading Shia of Allahabad; practised at Allahabad High Court; member of D.P. Congress Committee and AICC, 1919–21; worked closely with Jawaharlal Nehru and Kamaluddin Ahmed Jafri in Allahabad; Home Rule Leaguer; Khilafatist; stood for the Legislative Assembly in 1923.

² Syed Kalbe Abbas Naqvi (1891–1974); born at Jais in Rae Bareilly, UP; educated at Allahabad from where he took LLB degree; started practice at Allahabad in 1914, was non-official Chairman, District Muslim Educational Committee, 1916–26; General Secretary, All India Shia Conference, 1926 and again in 1935; appointed as Member, Provincial Muslim Education Committee of UP 1932; took a leading part in raising funds for the Muslim University and the

Shia College of which he was trustee; founder of All India Shia Political Conference, and Chairman Reception Committee at its first session in Lucknow, Member, UP Legislative Council, 1937, was later Judge, Income Tax Tribunal.

³ Syed Ali Zaheer; born 21 March, 1896; educated at MAO College, Aligarh; Canning College, Lucknow; Law College, Allahabad, Oxford, called to Bar, 1922, member, Lucknow Municipal Board, 1925–46; Member, Legislative Council, 1930–37 and again from 1939 till suppression of legislature, left Muslim League in 1937, organized Shia Community, elected President All India Shia-Political Conference 1941 and in 1945; convened in the same year Shia All Parties Conference to dispassionate itself from Muslim League policy, member for Law and Communication, Nehru's first interim Cabinet; Indian ambassador in Iran, 1947–51; Minister of Justice and Labour in UP, 1951 and reappointed as Minister in 1957; Member, AICC since 1955, wrote a book called *The Dead Past*.

129. On Shia–Sunni Controversy:¹ Nehru to Abul Kalam Azad, 17 April 1939

SWJN, Vol. 10, pp. 334–35.

My dear Maulana,

I received your letter yesterday afternoon. I felt that it was perhaps too late for me to go to Lucknow to meet Sir Sultan Ahmed. If, however, my presence there is required or he asks me to go, I shall certainly do so.

I sent your letter in original last night by messenger to Rafi Ahmed and asked him to show it to the other ministers. I fear there has been much bungling about this issue. Hafiz Ibrahim was particularly in charge of it and considerable pressure was brought to bear upon him by Maulana Husain Ahmad. The deputy commissioner also was very excited and pressed for an early decision by the government. Pantji, unfortunately, was and has been a very sick man, thoroughly tired out and with no freshness left about him. Rafi also had been unwell and had gone away for a few days' rest. The matter was thus decided in a hurry without full consideration of the consequences. Of course, they should have referred to you. The fact is that the ministry is weary with work and responsibility and tends to become stale.

Pantji was so unwell that he had to leave Lucknow immediately after and I am not sure that he has come back yet.

I understand that Maulana Husain Ahmad is very displeased with Moulvi Abdul Shakur as the latter did not play fair with him. Zaffar-ul-Mulk is probably still in prison (though I am not sure of this) because he refused to agree to the settlement.

If I can be of any use whatever, I shall gladly offer myself.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

¹ The Shia–Sunni Schism in Lucknow: In India, the Shias were few in numbers—not exceeding 4 per cent in any of the provinces in British India. They were most numerous in Lucknow and the satellite townships, where the *imambaras* and mosques stood as reminders of Shia domination under the Nawabs. Elsewhere, they were unevenly distributed—in the districts of Jaunpur where the Sharqis once held sway, in Machhlishahar, Lucknow, Allahabad, Aligarh, Muzaffarnagar, Moradabad, Amroha and in the princely state of Rampur. There were some influential Shias in these areas. The ruler of the Rampur State was a Shia. So were some leading taluqdars of Awadh, including the Raja of Mahmudabad and his kinsmen in Bilehra and Bhatwamau. The Syeds of Jansath and of Jalali in Aligarh district held fairly large estates. The number of successful professional men was small, though people like Syed Ghulam-us-Saqlain, Syed Wazir Hasan and Syed Raza Ali achieved prominence because of their involvement in provincial and nationalist politics.

A common cause of Shia–Sunni friction was the recitation of *tabarra*, a highly provocative practice intended to ridicule the first three *Khalifas* of Islam—Abu Bakr, Umar and Usman—for 'usurping' the claim of Ali as the successor of Prophet Mohammad, and *Madhe Sahaba*, a fervent affirmation of the righteousness of the Companions. There were riots in Lucknow and Allahabad in the 1880s and 1890s, and at Jaunpur and Banaras in 1901. The conflict deepened in Lucknow, where violent clashes in 1907 led the UP government to appoint the Piggot Committee to regulate Muharram observance. Its recommendations were embodied in a government resolution of 7 January 1909.

The most violent Shia-Sunni riots occurred in 1938–39, a sequel to a sustained protest movement, launched in May 1935, against the suggestion in official quarters that Madhe Sahaba would be forbidden on certain days. In 1936 a much stronger agitation developed as Sunni leaders insisted on their right to recite Madhe Sahaba after the Friday prayers. Faced with the prospect of escalating violence and pressured by contending parties, the UP government appointed yet another committee, headed by Justice Allsop, a High Court Judge, to review the recommendations of the Piggot Committee. Its report, submitted on 15 June 1937, recognized the theoretical right of the Sunnis to recite Madhe Sahaba but held that in the circumstances that prevailed in Lucknow it was a provocative action and should not be allowed. Endorsing the Piggot Committee's decision to ban Madhe Sahaba, Allsop opined that: 'if at any time it could be inferred that the recitation of Madhe Sahaba was a perfectly independent religious observance having no concern with the Shias or any Shia ceremony, we do not think the Shias could reasonably object to it. The question is largely one of intention, but intention can be inferred only from conduct and when we examine the conduct of the Sunnis in 1935 and 1936 we are forced to hold that their desire to recite Madhe Sahaba arose out of a feeling directed against the Shias.'

This suggestion fanned the fires of unrest. Husain Ahmad Madani, Principal of the Dar al-Ulum at Deoband, was among the foremost leaders to take up the banner of opposition. He advocated civil disobedience. Reaching Lucknow on 17 March 1938, he addressed a public meeting at which fiery speeches were delivered by Maulvi Abdul Shakoor, the firebrand head of the Dar al-Muballighin, and Maulana Zafarul Mulk, the chief exponent of Madhe Sahaba in Lucknow. Elsewhere, the Khaksar leader, Allama Mashriqi, threatened to despatch his band of followers to Lucknow. The Ahrars, fresh from their successful agitation against the Maharaja of Kashmir, organized *jathas* to lend weight to their protest against the Allsop report. They came from everywhere—from neighbouring Malihabad, from Delhi and Meerut and from as distant a place as Peshawar. By March 1939, hundreds of Ahraris were arrested on account of their militant posture.

The climax to this campaign was a mammoth public gathering at the famous Tila mosque on 31 March 1939. Tempers were frayed despite the fact that the G.B. Pant ministry had already bowed to mounting pressures from the pro-Congress Jamiyat al-ulama and his own Muslim ministers in allowing Madhe Sahaba on Barawafat. Close to the mosque is the imposing Asaf al-Daula Imambara, where the Shias had assembled to register their anger over the *volte face* executed by Congress government. They recited *tabarra* and excitedly climbed to the upper stories of the Imambara gateway and filled the parapet running along the outside. Some even rushed towards the Tila mosque but the police prevented them from entering the danger zone. Pandemonium prevailed as some nearby shops were set on fire. A free exchange of brickbats ensued, with the frenzied crowds waving all sorts of weapons which they had acquired from the shamianas and palisadas. The police opened fire, dispersed the mob and imposed curfew.

Harry Haig, UP's lieutenant-governor, reported that the sanction of Madhe Sahaba 'has set up among Shias conditions of intense emotional hysteria' and stiffened their resolve to prosecute the *tabarra* agitation. They would assemble each day at the Asafi Imambara, recite *tabarra* on the Husainabad road and then court arrest amid cries of 'Ya Ali'. And each day tension would inevitably heighten as the one time politically benign Nawabi city would be gripped by the fear of a violent outburst. This was so in June and November 1939 and in March 1940, when police firing resulted in heavy casualties. The pattern did not change afterwards as year after year Barawafat and Muharram occasioned widespread violence.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who spent time in Lucknow to resolve the deadlock and to save the Congress ministry from acute embarrassment, was disgusted by the happenings around. He wrote to Pant: 'It seems to me that something is radically wrong with us in India, or perhaps with the entire world, at the present moment. It is as if the blood of a human being has been poisoned and every little boil refuses to heal. There are so many aspects of the wider question which I want to discuss with you, but the Shia-Sunni dispute took up all our time and I wanted this to be over before going on to general issues.'

130. The Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy: Harry Haig to Linlithgow, 18 April 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

[Secret.]

No. UP – 244

My Dear Lord Linlithgow,

I have had occasion frequently in my fortnightly reports of the last two years to refer to the Madhe Sahaba controversy at Lucknow. The whole question has now come to a head, and I think Your Excellency may find it useful to have a connected account of the problem. I have accordingly written a note which summarizes the history of the controversy and the steps taken up to the

present time, and I send it herewith for Your Excellency's information. I am also sending a copy of this letter and of the note to the Secretary of State for his information.

Yours sincerely,
H.G. Haig.

[Enclosure]

The Lucknow Madhe Sahaba controversy.

[This note is based on a report prepared by J.M. Ewart for the Intelligence Bureau. See Home Political Department, File No. 75/6, 1939, National Archives of India.]

The Madhe Sahaba controversy in Lucknow originated about the year 1906. The Shias who are very numerous and influential in Lucknow held that the three Khalifas who immediately succeeded the Prophet and who were succeeded by Ali, were usurpers, that they were guilty of acts of tyranny and oppression against Ali and his wife Fatima, who was the daughter of the Prophet, and that the result of their policy was the terrible tragedy at Karbala when Hasan and Hussain, the sons of Ali, were massacred. This massacre is mourned at the period of Muharram. The Sunnis on the other hand regard the first three Khalifas as rightful rulers, and hold them in profound respect and regard them as men of great honesty, virtue and courage.

2. About the year 1906 disputes arose in Lucknow between the Sunnis and Shias about the celebration of Muharram, and the Sunnis began to recite verses in praise of the first four Khalifas whom they described as friends and comrades of each other and of the Prophet. These are the recitations which have now crystallized into what is known as the Madhe Sahaba or praise of the Companions. The Shias retaliated by employing the Tabarra, that is, curses on the first three Khalifas for their inhuman treatment of the descendants of the Prophet.

3. As a result of these demonstrations serious rioting took place between Sunnis and Shias in Lucknow in 1907 and 1908, and in 1908 the Government appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of Mr Justice Piggott, a High Court Judge. The conclusions of the committee were that the attempt to transform the *tazia* processions of the Muharram into processions in honour of the first four Khalifas was an innovation, and recommended that there should be a general prohibition against the organized recitation of such verses on three days, viz., Ashra (the 10th day of Muharram), Chehlum and the 21st of Ramzan. The Shias contended that the recitation of such verses was highly offensive to them at all times. The committee thought that the question of the public utterance of verses in praise of the first three Khalifas at times other than the three days mentioned should be left to the operations of the ordinary law. The Government accepted the prohibition on the three days mentioned and left the question of prohibition on other days to some extent open. The Government resolution of 1909 said: 'The, desire of the majority of the committee, which is entirely shared by the Lieutenant-Governor, is to correct this abuse (i.e., converting a Muharram procession in commemoration of the martyrdom of Hussain into an untimely demonstration in favour of the first three Khalifas) without interfering beyond what is absolutely necessary with the right which the Sunnis of Lucknow share with all classes of His Majesty's subjects to express at suitable times and in suitable places the distinctive doctrines of their faith.' The desire of the Shias was to secure a pronouncement from the Government that the public recitation of the praises of the first three Khalifas was at all times a provocation and an offence against the public peace. The Government resolution says that it is obviously impossible for the Government to issue any such pronouncement because the Sunnis have as much right as the Shias to hold the distinguishing doctrines of their faith; and to assert the same in the proper time and manner, with due regard to the provisions of Section 298 of the Indian Penal Code.

4. Soon after the issue of the orders of the Government in 1909, when there was great excitement in the city over the prohibition of the recitation of Madhe Sahaba on the Chehlum day, the Deputy Commissioner of the time issued a proclamation pointing out that the recitation of praises of the first three Khalifas was not entirely prohibited, but that restriction had been imposed only for the three days, and that on other days, the verses could be recited after a licence had been obtained under the provisions of the Police Act. It is said that this proclamation was subsequently withdrawn under Shia agitation. But while the theoretical position adopted by the authorities doubtless was that there should be no general prohibition of the Madhe Sabha, in practice no public recitation was ever permitted and in fact the Shias secured their object.

5. The controversy remained in abeyance until 1935 when on the day of Chehlum some Sunnis defied the order and recited the Madhe Sahaba. In 1936 a much stronger and more troublesome Sunni movement developed and a regular practice was started every Friday of disobeying the orders and reciting the Madhe Sahaba. Attempts were made to take out processions. This state of things continued for more than three months and a considerable number of arrests were made. As the course of events was seriously disturbing the tranquillity of Lucknow, efforts were made to bring about a settlement. I agreed to receive a deputation from Sunnis and Shias separately. In the meantime the movement of defiance by the Sunnis was called off and those who were in prison were released. I received these deputations in November and December 1936 and appealed to both parties to reach some agreement among themselves. Every effort was made for the next month or two through official influence to secure some agreement, but both sides remained uncompromising. My Government then appointed a committee consisting of Mr Justice Allsop, a High Court Judge, and Mr Ross, Collector in charge of the Jhansi division, to consider whether the principles and policy laid down by the Government Resolution of 7 January, 1909 required any modification, and whether the practice adopted by the district authorities in Lucknow with regard to these matters required any modification. The committee reported on 15 June, 1937.

6. The committee reviewed the past history of the case elaborately and also examined the principles of law. They came to the conclusion that the prohibition of assemblies and processions for the Madhe Sahaba on the three days had been rightly imposed. They then said: 'We have already expressed our belief that it was not the intention of the Government that the recitation of Madhe Sahaba on other days should necessarily be prohibited' and went on to point out that 'the real question is whether Madhe Sahaba recitations in public can fairly be considered as deliberate attempts at insult and annoyance.' Further they observed: 'If at any time it could be inferred that the recitation of Madhe Sahaba was a perfectly independent religious observance having no concern with the Shias or any Shia ceremony, we do not think the Shias could reasonably object to it. The question is largely one of intention, but intention can be inferred only from conduct and when we examine the conduct of the Sunnis in 1935 and 1936 we are forced to hold that their desire to recite Madhe Sahaba arose out of a feeling directed against the Shias.' Their conclusion is—'When we take the facts as a whole into consideration we cannot avoid the conclusion that the movement was essentially directed against the Shias and as such was rightly opposed by the authorities;' and later, 'We do not think that it should be assumed that the public recitation of Madhe Sahaba is always in all circumstances objectionable but we are bound to say that the authorities will have to take similar action in similar circumstances in the future, particularly if the Sunni agitation is continued.'

7. The general effect therefore of the Allsop Committee's report was while reasserting the theoretical right of the Sunnis to recite the Madhe Sahaba, to hold that in the circumstances that existed in Lucknow it was a provocative action and should not be allowed.

8. The report was presented after the new constitution had come into force and came under the consideration of the minority Ministry. They were reluctant to deal with this thorny question and left it alone. The present Ministry also tried to avoid tackling it and for some months the position remained quiescent. But the Sunnis were not content to leave the matter indefinitely without a decision, and eventually on 28 March 1938, the present Government published the Allsop Committee's report and their conclusions on it. The operative part of the resolution runs as follows: 'The United Provinces Government devoted most careful and anxious consideration to the arguments and conclusions so clearly set forth in the report and accept the Committee's findings. They wish to make it clear that the Sunnis' right of public or private recitation in praise of the three Khalifas is not in dispute. This right they undoubtedly possess. What is in dispute is merely the method and circumstances in which it had been sought to make such recitations in Lucknow, where there is a conflict between the tenets and points of view of different communities it becomes the duty of the Government to intervene in order to ensure public tranquillity and to maintain the balance of public convenience. The Committee's findings are based on these well recognized principles.'

9. The Sunnis were dissatisfied with this conclusion and were continually bringing pressure to bear on the Ministry to allow a recitation of the Madhe Sahaba under threat of starting a civil disobedience movement. Both my Muslim Ministers are Sunnis and thus personally inclined to favour the Madhe Sahaba agitation. The matter was handled on behalf of the Ministry by one of the Muslim Ministers, Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim.¹ During November 1938 while I was on tour, Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim apparently with the approval of his colleagues issued a Government Press communique, a copy of which is attached. In this it was said: 'For some time past Government have been intending to allow Sunnis to have public recitation of Madhe Sahaba in the manner mentioned above (i.e., special meetings and processions) provided there is peaceful atmosphere in the town of Lucknow. But Government regret that sometimes on account of threats of civil disobedience and sometimes for other reasons no such peaceful conditions could establish themselves.' The communique then went on to say that the Government were having talks with the Shias and Sunnis to bring about an amicable settlement and ended with the words: 'Either the talks will lead to some fruitful result or Government will in the near future make an announcement of their decision.' The result of this communique was that the threatened Sunni civil disobedience movement was postponed, but it was generally interpreted as a promise by the Government that they would before long allow a public recitation of Madhe Sahaba.

10. Discussions and negotiations went on and eventually the Sunnis about the beginning of March 1939 launched their civil disobedience movement. This met with a very considerable and growing degree of support. Large numbers of Lucknow Sunnis were arrested and *jathas* were organized in many other districts. The district authorities were becoming very restive under these conditions. For many months past relations between the two sects had been gravely strained, and it was only by the utmost vigilance that disturbances between them had been averted. The situation had not only become chronic, but seemed to be getting steadily worse. The Sunni agitation was encouraged by the knowledge that the Ministers were in favour of making a concession to them, and the district authorities felt that they were fighting a losing battle which would end in the granting of the Sunni claims after the agitation had got out of control. They therefore pressed for some definite decision of policy. I felt the force of these arguments and was anxious also to avoid a repetition of a decision being taken in direct negotiation with the Sunni leaders of the agitation, without the Ministry as a whole having had an opportunity of considering the matter. Accordingly I raised the question at a meeting of the Council of Ministers on 22 March 1939.

11. At this meeting it became clear that the Ministers were considering a concession to the Sunni demand, and felt themselves committed to giving the Sunnis an opportunity to recite the Madhe Sahaba publicly some time during this year. It was decided that the whole question should be discussed by the Ministers with the district authorities, the Commissioner and the Chief Secretary. The upshot of this decision was a proposal that the Sunnis should be allowed to hold a procession and meeting to recite the Madhe Sahaba on the Barawafat day each year. The intention was to prescribe a route for the procession far removed from any Shia population, and in fact to have the meeting on the other side of the river and outside the city. The advantage of this plan from the official point of view was that it would remove the perennial uncertainty as to whether Madhe Sahaba would or would not be allowed, and would limit the recitation of the Madhe Sahaba definitely to one day in the year. The question was raised what would be the reaction of the Shias; but though it was known that the decision would be bitterly resented by the Shias, and that the Shias might demand as a *quid pro quo* a procession to recite the Tabarra, or at any rate the praise of Firoz who had killed one of the three Khalifas, neither the district authorities nor the Ministers had any idea that the Shia reaction would be of a very striking character.

12. After further negotiation with the Sunnis, a communique was accordingly issued on 30 March 1939, stating that the Sunnis will in any circumstances be given the opportunity of reciting Madhe Sahaba at a public meeting and in a procession every year on the Barawafat day, subject to the condition that the time, place and route thereof shall be fixed by the district authorities. The communique was issued by the Ministers in some haste, and the intention which had previously been expressed that the Shias would be informed beforehand of what was intended was not carried out.

13. The result of the communique was that within a day or two the Sunnis called off the civil disobedience movement. But the effect on the Shias was far greater than had been anticipated. It appears to have been an overwhelming blow to them. Their view was that they had the authority of two separate committees and the practice of thirty years in support of their position. They had also been recently ingratiating themselves with the Congress in order to make their position stronger. It appears not to have occurred to them as a possibility that this permission would be given to the Sunnis. The sanction of the Madhe Sahaba has set up among the Shias conditions of intense emotional hysteria. It is particularly strong among the women. Civil disobedience was at once started and very large numbers of Shias have already gone to prison. In contrast to the Sunni Civil disobedience movement in which those offering themselves for arrest were generally the riff raff, Shias of the most respectable families and standing have been reciting the Tabarra and going to jail, and it is reported that if the Madhe Sahaba is actually recited, *pardah* ladies of high family will come out into the streets, recite the Tabarra and go to jail. This might create feelings of intense excitement. Shias of the very highest standing have said privately that it will be impossible for them not to offer themselves for arrest, and Shias outside Lucknow and even outside the Province seem to be seriously disturbed. Mr Kidwai, one of my Muslim Ministers, told me that he had been to see the prisoners in jail both during the Sunni Civil disobedience and during the Shia Civil disobedience, and he was very greatly struck by the difference in the class of prisoners. This difference seems to have made a great impression on his mind.

14. It is difficult to know exactly how far politics have played a part in this accentuation of the Madhe Sahaba controversy.

I think there is no doubt that the trouble to begin with at any rate was in fact encouraged by the Congress in order to split the Muslims. It must also be remembered that the Congress Muslims are mainly Sunni, and that this agitation had been adopted vigorously before the present constitution came into force by the Ahrars who are under the influence of the Congress. It is freely asserted

that Maulvi Hussain Ahmad Madani who has been the leading figure in the movement for a long time is in the pay of the Congress, and it is difficult to believe that they could not control him if they wished to. Nevertheless, my Ministers speak as if Maulvi Hussain Ahmad represents a force that cannot be controlled and is in fact a considerable embarrassment to them. If in fact the Congress have been playing a double game in this matter, it appears they have over-reached themselves. While the Sunni agitation was going on the Shias took great pains to conciliate the Congress, and the Muslim political movement as a whole was appreciably weakened. The effect of the orders now passed about the Madhe Sahaba is to swing over Shia opinion in the most violent way against the Congress. They feel that they have been betrayed and that a gross injustice has been perpetrated on them. At the same time the Sunnis, other than Congress Sunnis, are not likely to be in the least grateful to the Congress, and there are even traces of a feeling that the whole matter has gone too far and that something should be done on the part of the Sunnis to waive their rights in view of the tremendous strength of opinion shown by the Shias.

15. The Ministers are perturbed at the result of their orders about Madhe Sahaba, and are genuinely anxious that the tension should be relaxed and that a settlement should be reached. Various possibilities are at the moment under close consideration. The Barawafat day is on the 2nd or 3rd May.

H.G. Haig, 18.4.39.

¹ (Hafiz) Muhammad Ibrahim (1889–1964); born at Nagina in Bijnore district of UP. After finishing his early education from a *madarsa* (where he earned honorific ‘Hafiz’ for memorizing the Quran) he moved to Aligarh Muslim University (1908–15) where he spent seven years. He entered the Bar in his home district and took interest in politics. In 1937 elected to the UP Legislative Assembly as a Muslim League member. When the Congress and Muslim League could not agree in UP over the distribution of portfolios, Muhammad Ibrahim joined the Congress and was made a minister of the Provincial Congress Government, after Independence, he served as a minister in UP for a number of years. After the death of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in 1958, he held the rank of Cabinet Minister in the Central Government, he later served as the Governor of Punjab.

131. The Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy: Haig to Linlithgow, 26 April 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

[Extract]

8. The Madh-e-Sahaba situation is giving rise to great anxiety in Lucknow at present. I sent Your Excellency recently a full report of the whole Madh-e-Sahaba controversy bringing it up to date. We discussed the matter in Cabinet on the 18th April and at that time the Muslim Ministers were hopeful that the Sunnis might be prepared to surrender their right in order not to carry the controversy too far. Opinion, however, had seemed to be hardening again and the critical Bara Wafat day; which is the 2nd of May, was approaching. I therefore wrote a full note for the cabinet, bringing out the various considerations, and possibilities, and this was discussed fully yesterday evening. I found it desirable to take a somewhat definite line myself, as there seemed to be some hesitation among the ministers as to what should be done. But the conclusions we reached were concurred in by all and I think in fact caused them some relief of mind, as they laid down a clear policy. In the first place, it was decided that as the Sunnis had been given the right of taking out their procession on the Bara Wafat day it was essential to see this matter through. The District Magistrate has been instructed to prepare his plans in full detail for preventing interference with

this procession, which should not be a matter of any particular difficulty, and for dealing with what is likely to be a far greater embarrassment, the demonstration of the Shias on this day in other parts of the city reciting the Tabarra. Trouble is anticipated in particular from the activities of Shia *purdah* ladies who appear to be determined to come out on this occasion and demonstrate in public. The best method of dealing with them will receive the most careful consideration. Arrangements will be made to have an ample body of Police available and to warn the military. In the second place, it has been decided that it would only complicate the situation further at the present moment if the Shias were allowed to make any recitation of their own doctrines, short of Tabarra, which certainly could not be allowed. The Shias themselves would at the moment be content with nothing short of Tabarra, and the idea of putting them eventually on an equality again with the Sunnis must be left for consideration after the Bara Wafat. In the third place, it is agreed that every effort should be made to induce the Sunnis to make a concession which would pacify the Shias. Active conversations are in progress at the moment. The Muslim League appears at last to be taking a hand, and a good deal is hoped from the intervention of the young Raja of Mahmudabad who has been the chief financial support of the Muslim League in this Province and at the same time is a prominent and very devout Shia. Best of all would be that the Sunnis should voluntarily surrender altogether their right of reciting Madh-e-Sahaba. This is not altogether impossible, but is unlikely. It is possible that the Sunnis might be got to declare that after this one recitation of Madh-e-Sahaba they would not exercise the right again. At the moment the Shias are not disposed to accept this but they, might be got round to regard this as a reasonable settlement. Indeed, some months ago there was no doubt that the Shias were prepared to accept this proposal. Another possibility is that the Sunnis would merely declare that in view of the strong feeling of Shias they did not want to recite the Madh-e-Sahaba on the Bara Wafat day this year. That would give a whole years' respite and would at any rate greatly ease the immediate position. There is yet another proposal, to which I am myself very definitely opposed, and that is that the Sunnis should say that they did not wish to recite the Madh-e-Sahaba on the Bara Wafat day but ask for permission to recite it on some other day which may be fixed by the District Magistrate. This would simply have the effect of keeping the controversy alive and perpetuating the uncertainty to remove which was the main object of the present orders. I fancy some of the Hindu Ministers had been encouraging this idea with a view to conciliating the Sunnis on political grounds. But I was glad to find that both my Muslim Ministers were against it, though they are Sunnis. There the matter rests for the moment, but at any rate we have a clear programme.

9. There was a very deplorable incident two days ago when a band of some 30 to 40 Sunni demonstrators (part of a crowd of 4,000 to 5,000) forced their way into the Assembly Chamber when the Assembly was sitting and interrupted the proceedings. I discussed the whole matter with the Premier yesterday and also referred to it at the Cabinet meeting. The incident brings the administration into serious discredit, and the Ministers themselves feel this acutely. They are as anxious as I am that effective action should be taken to re-establish their credit. Though the Premier seems to have made some weak promises about the demonstrators not being arrested, in fact three of the ringleaders, who did not take part in the demonstration but had organized it from behind, have been arrested, and 7 of the actual demonstrators. Probably more arrests will be made, and these people will all be proceeded against vigorously. It is also not unlikely that one of the most troublesome leaders of the Sunni Madh-e-Sahaba agitation will be proceeded against under Section 107. Orders are being issued that in future no demonstrations will be allowed within a certain distance of the Council House. An urgent enquiry is being conducted by the Chief Secretary, which will probably be finished today, to ascertain the responsibility for the apparent failure of the Police to prevent the invasion of the Council House, and to deal with it adequately.

Finally, and this is a matter which I hope will have some considerable effect on the whole Sunni-Shia controversy, it is being announced that punitive Police will be imposed at once in Lucknow for a period of one year and that the cost will be levied from the Sunnis and Shias of Lucknow. It is also to be stated what that cost will be, and I hope that the figure will cause the Muslims to reflect on the unwisdom of prolonging this useless controversy.

132. On Madh-e-Sahaba and Tabarra Agitation in UP:
Rajendra Prasad to Govind Ballabh Pant, 9 May 1939

Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 3, Allied Publications, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 62-63.

Sadaquat Ashram
Dighaghat, Patna
9 May 1939

My dear Pantji,

I know you must be feeling much worried about the Madh-e-Saheba and Tabarra agitation in your Province. The Shias are much agitated and even in this Province some very prominent persons have seen me in this connection. There is one aspect of the agitation which requires consideration. It seems some people are engaged in intensive propaganda to show that the Congress has been trying to create division among Muslims and it has succeeded in doing so by favouring one party as against the other in this agitation. An attempt is being made to discredit the Congress Ministry among Muslims of both groups on this basis and it is freely talked that the whole agitation is being fomented by the Congress, if it was not created by it. I hope this has not escaped your attention. I trust your health is good. I am carrying on.

Yours sincerely,

133. The Sectarian Impasse: Haig to Linlithgow, 9 May 1939
Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

[Extract]

Since I last wrote the matter which has roused much the most intense public interest and feeling has been the Madh-e-Sahaba dispute. I mentioned in my last letter the conclusions of policy which the Government reached. In pursuance of these decisions elaborate precautions were taken for maintaining the peace on the 3rd May. Five hundred additional Police were drafted into Lucknow and the military authorities gave their fullest co-operation. A march of a large body of Police through the city a day or two before the date of the procession had a marked effect on public opinion. It was realized that Government intended to maintain the peace and had the means to do it. At the same time a state of considerable nervousness prevailed in Lucknow, and I think this was not without its effect in making the Shias behave in a more reasonable way than at one time seemed likely. It was a great relief to every one when the project of bringing out the Shia *pardah* women was abandoned. The Sunnis having gained their object were anxious that there should be no trouble on the Bara Wafat day. Some efforts were made beforehand by the more troublesome sections of the Sunnis to object to the route and restrictions laid down by the District Magistrate; but good sense prevailed and the procession went off quite peacefully and Lucknow heaved a very great sigh of relief. The lowest estimate given in the papers of the numbers in the procession

was 30,000, and on the whole I should think that is about accurate. In spite of the large numbers it was a very orderly procession. The district authorities deserve great credit for the arrangements and the sense of security was enhanced by the presence of a number of pickets of British troops at important places.

Negotiations for some kind of settlement which would have meant a voluntary surrender by the Sunnis of their right at any rate to repeat this procession continued right up to the 3rd May, but led to nothing. I think it is true to say that the great majority of reasonable Sunnis would have been very glad to reach such a settlement, but the Sunni masses were really out of control of any leaders. No one could answer for them. The Muslim League might have been able to do something had they taken a strong line, but it appeared that on the contrary the League were so nervous about their own organization being disrupted by this controversy that they would take no line at all, and I was told even that Jinnah had threatened ex-communication to any Muslim Leaguer who should try to intervene. I have read in the paper today that Jinnah suggests that the Muslim League may find some solution, but I am disposed to doubt whether this means anything. If Your Excellency hears again from the Nizam on this subject, perhaps it would not be unfair to ask him whether he would propound a solution, which owing to his great authority in the Islamic world might be expected to win acceptance. In fact a Shia did suggest this to me. But I fear His Exalted Highness would, follow the same policy as Mr Jinnah.

As soon as the Bara Wafat was safely over, I discussed the situation fully with the Premier and the two Muslim Ministers. We were all agreed that the time had come to make a strong effort to settle the controversy. The most satisfactory settlement of course would be a voluntary one between the Sunnis and Shias; but it seemed that there was no chance of the Sunnis, owing to absence of leadership, taking the necessary initiative. Consequently we agreed that the Government should concentrate on the only other feasible alternative, namely, to put the Shias back on an equality with the Sunnis by allowing them also to recite publicly their distinctive doctrines, provided such language was not used which was deliberately offensive to the Sunnis. In other words our view was that no form of Tabarra should be allowed, but that the Shias might be allowed to declare their own beliefs in this matter without abusing the three Khalifas. It seemed clear that unless the Shias got a concession of this kind, which in itself was entirely reasonable, they would not abandon their Tabarra agitation. Though they kept quiet on the Bara Wafat day, none of us was under any illusion as to the depth of their feelings, and the Ministers believe that if no settlement is reached, the Shias, who already have something like 8,000 persons in jail, will be able to put in another 8,000. The women also are sure to join the agitation before long if it continues. At a Cabinet meeting the day before I left Lucknow we discussed the situation, and the policy as indicated above was accepted. The Ministers were very busy when I left negotiating with the Shias, but I have not heard what the outcome of these conversations has been. At any rate I am convinced that the Ministers are very anxious now to bring the Shia agitation to an end and to close down, if possible, the controversy which is so profoundly disturbing the life of Lucknow and has shown signs of spreading widely outside. If the Shias are given an opportunity of taking out their procession, it is not unlikely that both sides will voluntarily abandon these processions. The District Magistrate, Jasbir Singh, who is a good officer, a brother of Sir Maharaj Singh, has been feeling very much the strain of the last few months, and now that the Bara Wafat is over has said that he feels he must have two months leave. There is no choice but to give it to him, for he is definitely over-strained. But it will not be easy to replace him. The Superintendent of Police, Parkin, has done admirably throughout this difficult time, has kept his head and has made excellent arrangements.



134. Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper, 11 May 1939

Jasbir Singh to Harper, 10 February, 1939, D.O. 296-C.R., General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 65, Box 607, Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow.

My dear Harper,

The Shia Political Association and the Tanzeem-ul-Momineen have amalgamated. In future the Tabarra agitation will be controlled by a sort of War Council. The number of arrests have lessened very appreciably and the general opinion is that the agitation is on the verge of collapse. Shia leaders may try to bolster up their efforts for some time longer by adopting fresh tactics, e.g., Satyagraha before the houses of the Hon'ble Ministers. There is a feeling however that this course of action may prove distasteful to Government and may damage the Shia cause very appreciably.

2. I said in my last Fortnightly D.O. that according to the information I have received negotiations between Government and the Shias have broken down. I gathered from a conversation I had with a Shia gentleman that they are still continuing. No solution appears to be in sight at present and under present conditions in Lucknow orders to the effect that the Shias should also be allowed to hold some kind of meeting, preceded by a procession, are fraught with grave danger to the public peace. The vernacular press (particularly Shia newspapers) continues to be most vituperative and a pamphlet issued by the Tanzeem-ul-Momineen yesterday or today to the effect that the Shias will be satisfied with nothing short of permission to recite the Tabarra publicly and that they do not care a fig for Maulana Abdul Shakoor, and his party has caused much annoyance to the Sunnis. The latter feel that it is impossible for them to make any generous gesture to the Shias so long as they continue the Tabarra agitation and decline to be satisfied with anything except an annual Tabarra procession and meeting.

3. A Sunni was attacked with a 'karauli' this morning by some Shias in mohalla Banjaritola. It is said that the parties quarrelled over a prostitute who was being visited by both Shias and Sunnis.

4. I still feel, as I stated in my F.D.O., that no compromise is possible while feelings are terribly bitter and the situation is extremely tense. Unfortunately neither the Sunnis nor the Shias are willing to be reasonable and a true spirit of compromise is for the moment conspicuous by its absence in Lucknow.

135. Nehru to Indira Nehru

SWJN, Vol. 10, pp. 624-25.

Lucknow
12 May 1939

Darling Indu,

... For the past week I have been so engrossed in Lucknow affairs that I have almost forgotten Hitler, Mussolini and all their unholy tribe. I came here specially for the Shia-Sunni trouble. It has grown to enormous dimensions and nearly 8,700 Shias are in prison and the bitterness between the two is something unbelievable. For this week I have spent long and exhausting hours, nearly all day and till far into the night, talking, discussing, arguing, drafting statements. Gradually we seemed to be coming nearer a settlement, or at any rate a provisional arrangement. We thought of clinching the matter today and then at the last moment everything broke down! And so here we are wondering what to do, at a loose end. Still I suppose we have to go on trying and we shall make another effort tomorrow. Anything more distressing or irritating I can hardly imagine....

Yours loving
Papu

136. Nehru to G.B. Pant

SWJN, Vol. 10, pp. 383–84.

Bombay
16 June 1939

My dear Pantji,

... I am sorry the Shia–Sunni conflict is going on. It seems to me that something is very radically wrong with us in India, or perhaps with the entire world, at the present moment. It is as if the blood of a human being has been poisoned and every little boil refuses to heal. There are so many aspects of this wider question which I wanted to discuss with you, but the Shia–Sunni dispute took up all our time and I wanted this to be over before going on to general issues I shall stay on here till the AICC meeting.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

137. On Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy: Nehru to Rajendra Prasad,
12 May 1939

SWJN, Vol. 10, pp. 336–37. See also Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 17 and 27 May and to Vallabhbhai Patel, 17 May 1939 in *ibid.*, pp. 339–40, 342–43.

My dear Rajendra Babu,

Pantji has just shown me your letter dated 11 May regarding the Madh-e-Sahaba controversy. It is difficult to write about this in any detail as the subject is frightfully complicated, although on the surface it is simple enough. I have been hung up in Lucknow for the last week because of this as I do not want to go away till the matter is settled. All the ministers are giving a great deal of time to this matter and everything possible is being done. Our efforts are devoted to bringing about an amicable settlement.

In the alternative, we want to do something which will at least put an end to the present civil disobedience and produce a better atmosphere for the settlement. What government intends doing in this case is to keep the communiqué of 31 March 1939, which gave the right of a procession or meeting to the Sunnis, intact. Also to give an equivalent right to the Shias too for procession and meeting, subject to one important qualification that there should be no Tabarra. As a matter of fact, the Shias are agreeable not to exercise this right for the present even though it is given to them. We are now considering the terms of the communiqué that should be issued on these lines in case the efforts at compromise fail for the present. We hope that there will be some outcome to all this in the course of two or three days at the most.

We are consulting all manner of people, Shias and Sunnis, so that any step that we might take might be generally approved of...

I am afraid Sir Sultan Ahmed managed to gather many wrong impressions during his visits to Lucknow. He has created a bad impression among his own Shia colleagues here and they are dissatisfied with him. The government's position has all along been that they will gladly give effect to any compromise. Otherwise, they must stick to their communiqué of 31 March. In the course of the negotiations, some Sunni leaders said that they hoped to bring round the others. Thereupon Rafi Ahmed informed Sir Sultan Ahmed that in case the Sunnis agreed, the government would also gladly agree. As ultimately the Sunnis did not agree, the government perforce could not. There was no breach of agreement by either the Sunnis or the government. It is difficult of course in such matters to treat anyone or two individuals as recognized leaders of a community.

I am staying on here till this matter is settled one way or the other. I have just had a telephone conversation with Maulana Azad and have explained to him the situation. He agreed with the general line we were adopting.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

138. On the Shia–Sunni Dialogue: Jawaharlal Nehru to Rajendra Prasad,
14 May 1939

SWJN, Vol. 10, pp. 338–39.

6 Couper Road
Lucknow
14 May 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,

After numerous difficulties and hitches we had hoped that the Government would issue its communiqué yesterday regarding the Shia–Sunni trouble. All the Shia leaders whom we had consulted agreed to certain drafts and the whole thing was got ready for publication. In the evening we learnt, however, that the two *mujtahids* who are the religious leaders of the Shias were not agreeable to the course suggested. So the matter stands hung up for the moment. Perhaps they might be brought round today by their colleagues.

Because of this I have had to stay on in Lucknow and Pantji, who was going to Nainital for rest, has also stayed on.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

139. Jasbir Singh to G.M. Harper, 16 May 1939

General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 65, Box 607, Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow.

D.O. 312 C.R.

Dear Mr Harper,

The position in regard to the Tabarra agitation remains unchanged and the hopes of a satisfactory settlement are still gloomy.

2. Small batches of Shias continue to court arrest daily from the Asaf-ud-Daula Imambara; the majority of them being from outstations.

3. I have just received a letter which is in the form of an ultimatum from the Anjuman-i-Sadi Bhawalpur State to the effect that ‘if an early reply regarding the just and impartial settlement of the existing dispute is not received within a week in this office 200 Shias in their first batch will be proceeding to Lucknow to participate with their Shia brothers in their auspicious sacrifices.’

4. In the *dehat* there was some trouble in Malihabad tahsil at village Kasmandi Kalan six miles from Malihabad proper.

Nothing was known about trouble brewing in this tahsil until the receipt of an anonymous letter by the Deputy Commissioner on 8.5.39. Enquiries were then made from the SO Malihabad who reported that a certain section of Muslims of village Kasmandi Kalan had arranged to take out a huge procession in the village on the 14th May at which the Madh-e-Sahaba would be

publicly recited. The SO added that a few Shias living in the village along with some Sunnis had objected to this and he suggested action under Sec. 144 and 107 CrPC on the ground that the procession was an innovation and was likely to lead to trouble. On receipt of this information the SDM hastened to the village and finding things in a bad way immediately issued an order under Sec. 144 CrPC prohibiting the procession on the grounds at forth in the report of the SO. A good number of Ahraris went out from Lucknow to defy the ban and to court arrest. In all 18 persons were arrested. These were from the village itself and other Ahraris came from Lucknow, Kakori and Malihabad.

The SDM went out again the next day and made personal efforts to dissuade the residents of the village from taking part in the movement and succeeded in preventing any support being given to the Ahraris who had gone there from Lucknow. In this connation the SDM acted with commendable tact and firmness. M. Abdul Halim of the Namus-e-Sahaba also was most helpful in the matter of pacifying the villagers and in preventing members of his association from joining the movement.

The residents of the village have now submitted an application to the effect that they have composed their differences and will not defy the prohibitory order under Sec. 144 which they desire should be withdrawn and those arrested released. The application has been sent by the SDM to the police for report. The ultimate action to be taken against those arrested will be decided on receipt of the police report in consultation with the SP.

On the assurance of the inhabitants the police posted at the village as a precautionary measure has been withdrawn.

140. The Shia-Sunni Impasse: Rajendra Prasad to Jawaharlal Nehru,
16 May 1939

Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 3, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 77-78.

*All India Congress Committee
Camp: Ranchi
16 May 1939*

My dear Jawaharlalji,

I have received your confidential letter and have seen in the Press that the negotiations for amicable settlement of Shia-Sunni dispute have terminated without any result. I do not know what is happening now. I presume the Shias will continue Civil Disobedience and will be courting jail.... It must be very distressing to put nine thousand people in jail who are apparently not opposed to the Government and many amongst whom are widely respected for one reason or the other. What troubles me even more is the propaganda which is gaining ground that the Congress stands to create division amongst Musalmans and what I apprehend is that after a time both will be more united against the Congress than they have ever been before. Shias are a small community amongst the Muslims. They have for some reason or the other taken a more nationalist line than the bulk of Sunnis in the past and their Conference had more than once adopted a line different from that of the others and more in conformity with national viewpoint. I am aware that some of the leaders of the Muslim League are Shias but I think the community as a whole has kept itself aloof from the communalist organization. This controversy will completely alienate them from the Congress, as the feeling amongst them is that the Congress Government is not acting fairly towards them. It is a most dangerous thing for any Government to allow such feeling to grow in

any community and more so in a community sympathetically inclined. At the same time I recognize that the Sunnis are a powerful community and are capable of creating much more trouble for the Government than the Shias. They have done so in the past and most of troubles which we have to face at the present moment is due to them. It is not possible therefore to ignore them. I do not know what can be done. Sir Sultan Ahmed on behalf of the Shias will now formally approach me as the acting President of the Congress to intervene in the matter....

I shall be at Ranchi till the 30th of May. Any letter or telegram addressed to me by name will reach me. I am also available on the phone and my telephone number here is Ranchi 42.

Yours sincerely,
Rajendra Prasad

Copy forwarded to Govind Ballabh Pant for information.

141. The Shia–Sunni Impasse: Jawaharlal Nehru to Rajendra Prasad,
17 May 1939

Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 3, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 78–79.

6 Couper Road
Lucknow
17 May 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,

Of the two courses that you suggest, one, the prohibition of the processions on both sides, is a proper one. But I fear under existing circumstances this is almost an impossible course. It will give rise to a feeling that the Government does not function at all and collapses before every agitation. There will be a fiercer agitation on the part of the Sunnis. That is why we have tried our best to get the Sunni leaders to agree to give up their right of procession. We have not succeeded thus far. The alternative that both should be allowed processions has been accepted by Government with one provision that there should be no Tabarra as such; though fair and legitimate criticism of historical personages of Islam (Sir Sultan Ahmed's phrase) has been accepted. The Shias stick at Tabarra. But not to prohibit Tabarra will again lead to all manner of difficulties.

I shall keep you in touch with developments and, if necessary, I shall stay on here till the end of the month. If your coming is helpful, I shall certainly request you to come.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

142. The Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy: Harry Haig to Linlithgow,
18 May 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2235, NAI.

[Confidential]
No. UP 265

My Dear Lord Linlithgow,

Many thanks for your telegram No. 1095-G., dated May 13th, 1939, repeating a copy of a telegram from the Nizam about the Madh-e-Sahaba controversy. I have waited a few days before

answering it, as my Ministers were at the time very closely engaged in important negotiations and I wished to see what was the result of these and, if they did not lead to agreement, how the situation was likely to stand.

2. I think before dealing with the Nizam's telegram it would be convenient that I should now place Your Excellency in possession of the latest developments. As I explained in paragraphs 8 and 9 of my letter No. UP-257, dated May 9th, there appeared to the Ministers and myself to be only two real possibilities. The first was a direct settlement between the Sunnis and Shias. This seemed at the moment very unlikely. The second was action by the Government to place the Shias on a reasonable equality with the Sunnis. This objective was adopted by the Cabinet, and when I left Lucknow the Ministers were busy exploring the situation with the Shias.

3. The Premier himself took a leading part in these conversations and did not merely leave them to the Muslim Ministers. He stayed in Lucknow for an extra day or two in order to try and bring the negotiations to a conclusion. I was of course not aware of the details, but I received from the Premier on 15 May the papers, of which I enclose a copy, which he had hoped represented a settlement. These papers consist of a draft communiqué, a draft letter from Saiyid Ali Zaheer and the Premier's draft reply. The communiqué follows very closely the main lines settled in Cabinet. The only new point is a good one, namely, the proposal of the Government to set up a committee with a view to arrive at a settlement with the consent of the parties concerned. The intention of the Premier, as explained to me subsequently, was that there should be some official of high standing, either administrative or judicial, to preside over the committee which should otherwise consist of an equal number of representatives of Sunnis and Shias, that there was no intention of their submitting a report unless they could arrive at agreed conclusions, but that if they could arrive at agreed conclusions and, report them to Government, the Government would accept them. In other words, this committee was merely intended to provide a means of conciliation which might, if the circumstances were favourable, be successful. It was not intended to pronounce an authoritative award such as the committee proposed by the Nizam. I think myself that the proposal of the Government is entirely on right lines and might be of value when the proper time comes, i.e., after the Shias have been put on an equality with the Sunnis.

4. I do not myself much care for the explanatory correspondence, in particular the statement that the Shias would be allowed to offer fair and legitimate criticisms of the historical personages of Islam, and I mentioned to the Premier that I thought this might lead to trouble from the Sunnis. He told me, however, that he had shown the drafts to certain moderate Sunnis, including Chhatari, who were quite satisfied, and of course the two Muslim Ministers who have been taking part in these conversations are themselves Sunnis. Actually the Premier's draft letter leaves the final decision about the nature of the recitations by Shias to the district authorities and safeguards the position against unreasonable or provocative recitations.

5. The Premier told me that the Shia leaders with whom these conversations had been conducted had practically accepted this settlement, but they said that they must consult one or two others before finally agreeing. As usually happens on such occasions, the more intransigent people raised objections and the more reasonable allowed themselves to be overruled. Consequently, though when the Premier left Lucknow he thought he had got an agreement, it has since become apparent that the Shias have refused to accept this settlement. There the matter stands at the moment.

6. The Premier said he felt it was necessary to stand quite firmly on two points, namely, that the Government communiqué of 31 March should stand unless it is modified by a mutually agreed settlement between the Sunnis and Shias, and secondly that no form of Tabarra should be allowed. The Government therefore can go no further to meet the Shias than is proposed in these papers. I am entirely in agreement with the Premier on these points. The question then arises whether it

would be wise for the Government to issue the draft communiqué without the correspondence, as stating and clearing their own position. The Premier thinks this would not be wise, for at the present stage the Shias having rejected this offer would be bound to criticize and attack it, and consequently would find it impossible at a later stage to accept it, which is a possibility that must not be ruled out. If there were public discussion of this communiqué now, the Shias would subsequently, if they wanted a settlement, require some further concession, and Government are unable to give any further concession. These agreements seem to be sound.

7. The intention therefore is for the moment to leave things alone. The fact of these negotiations and the general line of the proposed settlement are well known. It seems to me unlikely that after this the Shia agitation will continue with much less vitality, for reasonable Shias know that they could have had a reasonable settlement. It is not impossible that after a few weeks the Shias will come round and ask for the terms they are now rejecting. In the meantime if their agitation continues it is likely to command less public sympathy than before. In the beginning there was a fairly general feeling of sympathy with the Shias. After their rejection of these terms there will be little sympathy left.

8. I now come to the Nizam's telegram. My intention in what I said in paragraph 8 of my letter of May 9th had been that the Nizam might be asked to use his influence directly on his co-religionists for purposes of a settlement between themselves, but I felt it probable that like Jinnah he would shrink from this, and refuse to jeopardize his position by making definite proposals for a settlement or endeavouring to arrange terms. As a most influential Muslim he might take a part in what everybody recognizes as the only true solution of the matter, namely, an agreement between the Sunnis and Shias. But if he is not prepared to do this, his suggestions for action to be taken by the Government, though deserving of careful consideration, carry no particular authority.

9. At the last Cabinet meeting in Lucknow the possibility of setting up another committee something on the lines of the Piggott or Allsop committees had been raised by one of the Ministers and was discussed. We felt this was not likely to be wise. So far as the legal aspects were concerned we had already had two committees presided over by High Court Judges which had gone carefully into the law. The issues to be decided were really administrative issues relating to the city of Lucknow. We were not likely to receive any better guidance from a third committee than had already been given by the two previous committees, which had in fact dealt with the whole problem very fairly and thoroughly. It was not considered that the Government could possibly surrender its responsibility for decision to any committee, for the enforcement of the decision might involve the Government in very far-reaching action. On the other hand if it retained its own executive judgment it would have to reach conclusions after considering the report of this third committee, which it was in as good or even better position to reach without the intervention of a committee. Indeed the appointment of a committee would really put the matter back again where it was three years ago. Everything that has been done would be reopened, and we should probably have to go through the whole agitation once more; for if one thing may reasonably be taken as certain, it is that the pronouncement of such a committee, or rather of its presiding officer, would not be accepted by both sides.

10. For these reasons which appear to me to be sound I do not think the suggestion of another committee at this stage is helpful, except in so far as it may be regarded as a method of conciliation, and this is already provided in the Government's scheme. As I have explained in the earlier part of this letter, we have now in my opinion reached the final stages of this controversy and I should hope are not very far from final decisions. It would be very unwise to throw the matter open again to discussion *ab initio*. I quite recognize that the idea has from certain points of view attractions. If both sides could be got to agree that they would accept the decision of such a commission, the

whole controversy would be solved. But I confess I see no possibility of this. The controversy concerns religious rights and claims and rouses intense feeling. Neither party are likely to submit their religious rights to the arbitration of an outsider, however eminent. Moreover one of our chief difficulties throughout has been to find any persons who can really answer for either side.

11. I need not go into the probable attitude of my Ministers to a suggestion that a commission should be appointed by Your Excellency. But apart from all questions of constitutional prestige, I think it would be decidedly unwise to attempt to deal with this matter as a general question between Sunni and Shias all over India. It is in terms still a dispute regarding conditions and action at Lucknow, and it seems to me exceedingly important to keep it as far as we can on that plane.

Yours sincerely,
H. G. Haig

[Enclosure: 1]

[Confidential.]

Draft Communiqué.

Government deeply regret the continuation of discord between the Shias and Sunnis of Lucknow which has resulted in disobedience of the law and the arrest and imprisonment of a large number of persons. They have endeavoured to bring about an amicable settlement, realizing that only such a settlement, as carries with it the goodwill of the parties concerned, can be an abiding one. That endeavour has so far not succeeded but Government still hope that the two communities will be able to come together and to reach an understanding on a mutually satisfactory basis.

With this end in view and in order to promote harmonious relations between the two communities, Government propose to set up a committee at an early date. The objective of this committee will be to endeavour to arrive at a settlement with the consent of the parties concerned. Any such mutually agreed settlement will be welcomed by Government and will be given effect to.

Government wish to declare that the decisions embodied in their communiqué of 31 March 1939, remain unaltered. They trust, however, that the rights thus recognized, like all rights, will be exercised with a view to avoid ill-feeling as far as possible and in an atmosphere of friendliness and goodwill.

Government understand that certain misapprehensions have arisen in the minds of the Shias in regard to the exercise of their religious rights. Government take this opportunity of affirming that the Shias have the same right to declare the distinctive articles of their faith as any other community and may exercise them in a like manner. But Government are unable to permit the public recitation of Tabarra, or any statements which are not permitted by law. Subject to this reservation, all communities have an identical freedom to practise their religion in public or private. Government are prepared to give facilities to the Shias, similar to those given to the Sunnis, for the exercise of an equivalent right. Government trust that this clarification and the fresh attempt to find a solution will lead to a final and satisfactory settlement of the problem, so that goodwill might prevail and public peace and tranquility be ensured. They invite the co-operation of all concerned in this endeavour to end a conflict which is injurious not only to the two communities but to the nation at large.

[Enclosure: 2]

Lucknow, 14 May 1939

My dear Pandit Ji,

After two days discussion you showed us yesterday the draft of a communiqué which Government intend issuing. This draft laid stress on the desirability of a final settlement which is

satisfactory to all parties concerned and ends the unfortunate controversy which has agitated us for so long. Further it recognized the right of the Shias to declare the distinctive articles of their faith and stated that Government are prepared to give facilities to the Shias, similar to those given to the Sunnis, for the exercise of an equivalent right. In the draft of the proposed communiqué you have reaffirmed your decisions of 31 March 1939. This was, in my opinion, hardly necessary. I have no doubt that in case an amicable settlement is reached, through the intervention of the proposed committee, cancelling or varying the terms of your communiqué of 31 March this mutually agreed settlement will replace the communiqué. We agree entirely with you in your desire to bring about an amicable settlement satisfactory to the parties concerned and we are prepared to do our utmost to bring this about. We also appreciate that you are prepared to give us facilities to declare our distinctive articles of faith and to exercise a right equivalent to that granted to the Sunnis. In the course of our conversation yesterday we asked you whether, in terms of the communiqué, the Shias would have the right to offer fair and legitimate criticisms of the historical personages of Islam. You were pleased to tell us that this was so. We should like to know if our impression was correct. If this point is made clear and the right of the Shias to fair and legitimate criticism is recognized, the Shias will have no objection to accepting your communiqué as satisfactory.

We should like to mention further that in this event we, as a token of goodwill, will be willing not to exercise the right given to us by the communiqué and further clarified by your letter, so long as there is any prospect of a peaceful settlement being reached. In the event, however, of there being no such settlement and the Sunnis deciding to take out their Madh-e-Sahaba procession or holding a meeting for this purpose during Rabiul Awal next year, we will certainly exercise a similar right.

Yours sincerely,
Saiyid Ali Zaheer

To
The Hon'ble Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Premier, UP.

[Enclosure: 3]

Lucknow, May 1939

My dear Ali Zaheer,

I have your letter of today's date. I appreciate your desire and that of your colleagues to help in every way in bringing about an amicable settlement. We must do our utmost to bring this about. You have correctly stated the position about the communiqué of 31st March 1939. It is definitely stated in the draft intended to be issued that the Government will accept the mutually agreed settlement and in the event of a settlement, modifying or varying the communiqué, being arrived at, such a settlement will be given effect to.

Your impression of what I said yesterday is quite correct. Fair and legitimate criticism is always permissible, and, in terms of the communiqué, the Shias certainly have that right. I have no doubt about this as I told you yesterday. Question may arise of course as to what is fair and legitimate criticism. Such questions will have to be decided, when the occasion arises, by the district authorities. Whatever recitations or statements are to be made in the procession or meeting should be settled beforehand and approved by the district authorities. This was the procedure adopted in connection with the Madh-e-Sahaba procession and meeting.

I appreciate greatly your assurance on behalf of the Shias that as a token of goodwill they will not exercise this right this year.

Yours sincerely,
G.B. Pant

143. Azad Suggests Round Table Conference: Shia–Sunni Settlement Chances Brighten

National Herald, 18 June 1939.

Lucknow, Friday

The members of the Shia deputation who had gone to Calcutta to meet Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in connection with Tabarra–Madh-e-Sahaba Controversy have come back to the city. Inquiries reveal that chances of a settlement are quite bright. Maulana Azad is reported to have suggested that a round table conference of Shias and Sunnis be held with a view to bringing about a compromise, and that the suspension of Tabarra agitation should precede such a conference. Maulana Azad is also reported to have promised that if the proposed round table conference failed to bring about a settlement, he would make certain suggestions to the United Provinces Government for a settlement of the dispute.

The deputation will meet Maulana Nasir Husain, chief Shias divine, on Saturday and will seek his advice. It is understood that the final decision lies with him.

The authorities today stiffened the police guards at the Imambara Asaf-uddaula and the roads leading to it in view of the large gatherings of Shias and Sunnis in the Imambara and the Tila Mosque, respectively, for Friday prayers, and the increasing tension between the two communities.

Everybody who passed along the roads leading to the Imambara and the Tila Mosque was thoroughly searched for arms.

A number of Shias and Sunnis from whose possession knives and *Karaulis* are reported to have been recovered were taken into custody.

Police Arrangements

As the police guard today was brought nearer to the Imambara, there was not much space left for the Shias to go about reciting ‘Tabarra’. Consequently, there was resentment among them. Strong speeches protesting against the police arrangements were made at the meeting inside the Imambara. The Shias, who had mostly come from the Punjab and the NWF Province decided to carry on the agitation even if there was the risk of a lathi charge or firing by the police.

The organizers of the Tabarra agitation met the police authorities and as a result of the talks between them, the police guard was withdrawn from the gates of the Imambara to a respectable distance. Later, ‘jathas’ came out of the Imambara, reciting ‘Tabarra’. They were arrested on the Husainabad road.

144. Shia Agitation to Continue: Maulana Azad’s Promise to Deputation

Hindustan Times, 19 June 1939.

Three days’ discussion between the Shia leaders since the return of the Shia deputationists from Calcutta after interviewing Maulana Abul Kalam Azad did not bear fruit and the Tabarra agitation is to continue.

The details now available show that the Shia deputationists put the following seven proposals before Maulana Abul Kalam Azad with a view to create a peaceful atmosphere for the Shias and the final closure of the Tabarra agitation.

1. Messrs. Tausifullah and Hamidali, sub-inspectors, are to be transferred at once from Lucknow.
2. The facilities to the Tabarra prisoners should be restored which were in existence before the Benares jail incident since when extreme severity and harshness have been imposed resulting in hunger-strike of the prisoners in the Benares jail.
3. Cases under section 107 CrPC against the Shias they should be allowed to lead a free life, more particularly in view of the non-violent manner in which such a big agitation is carried in spite of the recent provocation to murder three Shias.
4. Securities have been demanded from the Shia papers *Sarfaraz* and *Alwaiz* and all Shia papers have been served by orders to furnish securities. These orders should be withdrawn.
5. Shia students who have gone to jail should be released before 8 July when schools and colleges will reopen and there should be no difficulty for them to rejoin their classes.
6. Similarly teachers of educational institutions should not be allowed to suffer for taking part in the agitation and their service should remain unaffected; and
7. Twenty non-official visitors for jails in the provinces should be appointed to obtain the views of the prisoners about the suspension of the agitation and the terms on which it should be finally closed.

With the exception of number three and four Maulana Azad said that these would be given effect to immediately irrespective of the talk for a final settlement. About points three and four he said he would get them done immediately on the announcement of the suspension.

The Anjuman Tanzimul Mommin at its meeting this morning passed a resolution to the effect that none of these conditions having been fulfilled so far, the Anjuman finds the atmosphere for Shias unfavourable for suspending the agitation. The Anjuman, however, will always be prepared to consider the question when conditions favourable for reconsideration of the position are created. There is also an apprehension among the Shias whether with all his goodwill and intentions Maulana Abul Kalam Azad will be able to prevail upon the UP Government to give effect to his final recommendations in the matter.

145. Suspension of Civil Disobedience: Maulana Azad's Appeal to Shia Leaders

Hindustan Times, 20 June 1939.

An appeal to Shia leaders in Lucknow to suspend the civil disobedience movement so as to clear the way for a settlement of the Shia-Sunni dispute is made by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, in the course of a statement in which he corrects certain observations contained in a statement made from Lucknow, regarding the decision of the Shia leaders.

The following is the text of Maulana Azad's statement:

A statement has been published in today's papers from Lucknow about the decision of the Shia leaders relating to suspension of the civil disobedience movement. If the members of the Lucknow deputation who had come to Calcutta, have supplied the material for it, I am sorry to say that they have not been careful enough in giving the facts, as was expected from them. The statement says that the deputation presented seven demands before me as a condition precedent to the suspension of the civil disobedience movement, and that for five of them I assured them

that 'these proposals would be given effect to immediately, irrespective of talk for a final settlement.' This is not correct. The deputationists had undoubtedly laid stress on the fact that cases under Section 107 and the order demanding security from two Presses be withdrawn. I had clearly told them in reply that if the civil disobedience continues, the Government will be compelled to take all such steps as are necessary to maintain law and order, and that it is difficult for me to advise the Government anything contrary to this under the existing conditions. But, if the civil disobedience is postponed in response to my appeal, I would have no difficulty in advising the Government to withdraw such precautionary orders. I had not made it a secret from the deputationists that I have already had a talk with the Premier about it as the same kind of request was made by Maulana Mohammed Saeed previous to the arrival of the deputation.

A member of the deputation mentioned some other matters also, for instance, the release of students before examinations, and the safeguarding of the services of school teachers. I gave them the same reply, which I had given them previously. If the way for a settlement, according to my proposal, is cleared, I said I shall see that these matters are also settled as desired. I also drew their attention to the fact that the UP Government does not desire to prolong this unfortunate situation even for a second. Therefore, there is no reason why the Government should not do whatever it can to create a peaceful atmosphere. If the civil disobedience movement is suspended, I had offered my personal responsibility in this respect.

Promise Fulfilled

So far as the sending of trusted men to the jails is concerned, in order to elicit the opinion of the prisoners, it is true that I had promised to get them full facilities for this, but it is not correct that this promise remains yet to be fulfilled. I fulfilled my promise without delay. I telephoned to the Premier to arrange for the nominees of the President to go to the prisoners in jails by issuing the necessary directions.

It is true that I had expressed my willingness to listen and help them in regard to any legitimate grievance against the Government irrespective of the present negotiations. In this connection, they wanted to get two sub-inspectors of police transferred and substituted by Hindu sub-inspectors. They did not refer to any definite complaint against them, but they thought it to be more expedient. I told them that I could give them no assurance about it at the time but I would talk to the Premier.

Appeal to Shia Leaders

I appeal to all the Shia leaders once again not to waste their time in such discussions. They should rather co-operate with me in improving the situation. If they are prepared to suspend the civil disobedience movement, these things can be removed without any difficulty. The situation is getting more complicated as time passes and new difficulties are coming up day by day. All those persons who feel any responsibility in the matter are bound not to tolerate the present situation any further and by suspending the civil disobedience movement they should clear the way for proposed Shia-Sunni Conference.

—API



146. Not Much Difference Between Views: Reply to Maulana Azad:
Shia Deputation Leader's Statement

National Herald, 22 June 1939.

Mr Asghar Hussain, leader of Shia deputation which waited on Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in Calcutta in connection with the Tabarra agitation, has issued the following statement in reply to that of Maulana Azad:

Mr Asghar Hussain says,

'My attention has been drawn to the statement of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, dated June 19, regarding the conversation between him and the Shia deputationists. I take full responsibility for the statement published by the Associated Press. I do not think there is much difference between the statement published by the Associated Press and the statement of Maulana Azad. The two outstanding proposals about the withdrawal of the order under Section 107 CrPC and of the demand of security from two presses were stated by me to be considered only after an announcement of the suspension of the Tabarra agitation. This settles the point that Maulana Azad clearly told then that if the civil disobedience continued the government would be compelled to take all such steps as were necessary to keep law and order, and that it was difficult for me to advise the Government anything contrary to this under the existing conditions'.

'I have no doubt that whether the Maulana said this expressly or not the deputationists left him under the impression that they would wait for the fulfillment of those proposals before the agitation was temporarily called off, for the reason that Maulana Azad candidly, and fairly said that they were proposals reasonable on their merits and would have been favourably considered by him even if there were no negotiations for a settlement of the controversy.'

Index

- Abdul Halim, Maulana 1246, 1948
 Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangh 1482, 1516
 aboriginals (Adibasi): grievances 1325–6; justice to 1327; movement 1333–4, 1791
 Adhikari, G.M. 1376, 1686, 1725, 1727
 Adiseshiah 1473, 1486
 adult franchise 993
 Affendi, Mohammad Ehsanul Haq 1358
 Agarwala, Narayan Prasad, 1266
 Agra Socialist Publishing Co., 1512
 agrarian conditions: in Bihar 1364–5; in Zamindari areas 1483
 Ahl-i Hadith 1241ⁿ⁷
 Ahmad, A. Rahim 1179
 Ahmad, Abdur Mansoor 1684
 Ahmad, Abdul Qayum 1415
 Ahmad, Hafiz Nazir 1430
 Ahmad, Israr 1753–4
 Ahmad, Kazi Ahsan 1011, 1246
 Ahmad, Khwaja Ghulam 1875
 Ahmad, Maulana Bashir 1244, 1430
 Ahmad, Maulana Husain 1245, 1777, 1935
 Ahmad, Mobiuddin 1875
 Ahmad, Muzaffar 1051ⁿ², 1524–5
 Ahmad, Qazi Najamuddin 1429
 Ahmad, S. Sharfuddin 1788
 Ahmad, Shah Mustafa 1869–70, 1874
 Ahmad, Sirajuddin 1241ⁿ²
 Ahmad, Z.A. 1198, 1200, 1283, 1554, 1673, 1674
 Ahmad, Ziauddin 1773–4, 1779, 1784, 1788
 Ahmed, Burham 1832
 Ahmed Din, Khwaja, 1246
 Ahmed Din, Munshi 984
 Ahmed, Maulvi Mafizuddin 1758
 Ahmed, Maulvi R. 990
 Ahmed, Riazuddin 1415
 Ahmed, Shamsuddin 1684
 Ahmed, Sultan 1748, 1935, 1946, 1949
 Ahmedabad: Textile Labour Association 1024; textile workers struggle, 1070, 1076
 Ahrar Conference 1252–4
 Ahrar Party 1244–5, 1281, 1299
 Ahrars, 1841, 1895, 1940, 1948
 Ahulwala, Maulana 1246
 Ajmer Shooting case 1565
 Ajmeri, Tajuddin 1183–6, 1246
 Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Yuvak Sabha, Constitution, objects and rules 1926–7
 Alam, Dr Sheikh Mohd. 1214
 Aleem, Abdul 1477–8
 Ali, Aftab 1727
 Ali, Ahmad 1595ⁿ¹
 Ali, Asaf 1209, 1350–2, 1415
 Ali, Captain A.F.M. 1029
 Ali Imam, Syed 1413
 Ali Jan 1870
 Ali, Kamal 1684
 Ali, Kasim 1754
 Ali, Khan Bahadur Mohammed 1758
 Ali, Maulana Ahmad 1684
 Ali, Maulana Azhar 1253
 Ali, Meher 1594
 Ali, Nausher 1051ⁿ², 1300, 1594, 1684, 1759ⁿ²
 Ali, Sharaf Athar 990
 Ali, Wazir 1876
 Aligarh movement 1848
 All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) 1042, 1049, 1566, 1581, 1728, 1734–5, 1737
 All India Labour Unions Conference, Nagpur 1055
 All India Momin Conference 1415
 All India Muslim Educational Conference (1939) 1848–53
 All India Organization of Textile Workers 983
 All India Progressive Writers' Conference 1475–8
 All India Railwaymen's Federation 1048, 1053, 1070, 1071
 All India Shia Political Conference 1928–9
 All India Spinners Association 1439
 All India States People's Conference 1262
 All India Students' Conference (1939) 1475, 1479–81
 All India Students Council (AISC) 1480, 1483
 All India Students' Federation, 1475, 1729
 All India Textile Workers' Conference, Cawnpore (1938) 982–4, 1057, 1070
 All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) 981–2, 984, 997–8, 1005–8, 1009, 1022–4, 1033ⁿ¹, 1043, 1045, 1075; resolutions of the Working Committee 1047–50

- All-India Village Industries Association 1672
 All India Women's Conference (AIWC) 1186–7, 1379, 1419–20
 All-India Working Class Party, 1018–21
 Allah Bakhsh, K.B. 1240, 1385ⁿ¹, 1843, 1844, 1906
 Allama-Assaleh-Tunisi 1255
 Alleppey workers 992–4
 All-Malabar Peasants' Union, 1482
 Allsop Committee 1936ⁿ¹, 1938–9, 1951
 Almoula, Bhalchandra N. 1579
 Alva, Joachim 1585–6
 Alva, Violet 1586–7
 Amarendra Nath 1711–12
 Ambadas, Dhondo 1056
 Ambedkar, B.R. 1016, 1024, 1035, 1804–6
 Ambernath, labour meeting 1075–6
 Amin, Nurul 1684
 Amrit Kaur, Rajkumari 1270, 1279, 1280
 Amir Ahmad Khan, Raja of Mahmudabad 1361, 1471, 1928, 1942
 Anand, Mulk Raj 1476
 Andamans Hunger Strike 1503
 Anderson, John 1685
 Andhra University 1453
 Andhra: agrarian and industrial problems 1455–6;
 Congress Socialist Party (CSP) 1472, 1486, 1714;
 Mahasabha and Andhra Province 1458–9;
 9th July demonstration 1682, 1692; Provincial
 Congress Committee (APCC) 1452–68, 1484,
 1485–7
 Andrews, C.F., 1890ⁿ¹
 Aney, M.S. 1194–5, 1251ⁿ¹, 1329, 1330, 1367ⁿ¹,
 1541, 1890, 1891
 Anglo-German war 1902
 Anglo-Indian Civil Liberties Association 1194,
 1554
 Anglo-Indian Jute Mill, Jagatdal 1051
 Anglo-Indians, special treatment 1044
 Anglo-Italian Agreement 1538
 Anglo-Mohammadan law 1256
 Angus Jute Mill 1028
 Anjaneyulu, K. 1457
 Anjayya, A. 1455
 Anjuman-i Ahrar 1253
 Anjuman-i Himayat-i Islam 1896
 Anjuman-i-Sadi 1947
 Ansari, Abdul Qaiyum 1301
 Ansari, Firdul Haque 1544
 Ansari, M.A. 1241ⁿ⁶, 1245ⁿ¹, 1247ⁿ¹, 1301, 1413
 Ansari, Shaukatullah 1241–2
 Anti-Recruitment Bill 1187
 Anushilan 1594
 Appa Rao, G.B. 1372
 Appanna, Madimi 997
 Arbitration Committee 1028
 Arms Act 1804, 1901, 1920
 Army Recruitment Bill 1281
 Arora, Arjun 1036, 1092, 1379–80, 1554
 Arya Samaj 1688
 Ashraf, K.M. 1200ⁿ³, 1283, 1475, 1479
 Arya, Bhishma 1554
 Asad Ullah Asad 1933
 Assam: Provincial Congress Committee (APCC)
 1012, 1438–44; tea gardens, unrest 1027
 Assam Oil Company, Digboi: workers' struggle/
 strike 981–1000, 1011, 1012, 1026, 1039–40,
 1041–3, 1048–9, 1081–2, 1098–1100
 Associated Press 1488, 1743, 1957
 Association Act (1931) 1914
 Association of Congress Committees 1017
 Ataturk, Mustafa Kamal 1476
 Atherton-West, Kanpur 1077
 Aurangzeb 1925
 Aurobindo *See* Ghosh, Aurobindo
 authoritarianism 1073, 1261, 1397–8, 1568, 1612,
 1623
 Awasthi, Ram Chandra 1051ⁿ¹
 Awasthi, Suraj Prasad 1092
 Axis powers 1621
 Ayyangar, A. Rangaswami 1483ⁿ³
 Ayyangar, M. Ananthasayanam 1458
 Azad, Chandrasekhar 1528ⁿ¹
 Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam 1187–8, 1190, 1194–5,
 1201, 1208, 1209, 1247ⁿ¹, 1257, 1259, 1270, 1273,
 1283ⁿ², 1350–2, 1359, 1412, 1500, 1550, 1751,
 1789, 1830, 1847, 1935–6, 1947, 1954–5, 1957
 Azad Muslim Conference 1385
 Azad, Prithwi Singh 1565, 1614–15, 1686
 Azhar, Maulana Mazhar Ali 1246, 1851
 Aziz, Sheikh Abdul 1430, 1745, 1836, 1850, 1875
 Bagchi, Kali Pada 1396
 Baig, Mehboob Ali 1483
 Bajaj, Jamnalal 1623
 Bajpai, Surendranath, 1856
 Bakshi, Satyaranjan 1695
 Balai Babu 989
 Balkans 1010, 1079
 Banerjee, Arun 1260
 Banerjea, Charu Ch. 986, 988, 1051, 1594
 Banerji, Rabindranath 1555
 Banerjee, S. 1029
 Banerji, Sailendra 1868
 Banerjee, Sibnath 1051, 1301, 1668
 Banerjee, Suresh Chandra 981–2, 1008, 1049,
 1050, 1051ⁿ², 1301

- Banerjea, Surendranath 1910, 1711
 Bapat, Senapati 1661
 Bapiraju, Chandrupatla 1462
 Baranagore Jute Mills 1095
 Bardoli Satyagraha 1429ⁿ²
 Bardoloi, G.N. 1440
 Bari, Maulvi Abdul 1003–4, 1757
 Barooah, Dev Kanta 1438
 Barooah, Hem Chandra 1438, 1441
 Barooah, Liladhar 1438, 1440, 1441
 Basu, Santosh Kumar 1593
 Bata Company 987
 Bechar, Narayandas 1049
 Begowalia, Abdul Aziz 1253
 Bekar Sangha 1260
 Beli Ram, Rai Bahadur 1916
 Benares Hindu University 1725
 Bengal: Hindus 1910–2; Hindu Sabha 1876–7, 1886, 1898, 1903–4, 1913; Jute Ordinance, 983, 991, 996, 997; Kisans Conference, 1513; Labour Association 982ⁿ³, 985, 989; Labour Party 1630; Legislative Assembly (BLA) 1050, 1051; 9th July demonstrations 1692; Provincial Congress Committee (BPCC), 991, 1034, 1051, 1052, 1171–4, 1183, 1185, 1265, 1304, 1352–7, 1367, 1369, 1376, 1388–91, 1396–7, 1431, 1432, 1468–70, 1475, 1555, 1595, 1672, 1691, 1713, 1714;—on Bose's expulsion, 1378–9; Provincial Trade Union Congress (BPTUC) 991, 992, 1005–6, 1008, 1040ⁿ¹, 1049, 1050, 1075; Provincial Ulama Conference 1306–7
 Bengal Central Jute Worker's Union 1090
 Bengal Jute Mill Mazdoor Union 1092
 Bengal Jute Strike (1937) 1019
 Benipuri, Rambriksh 1002, 1029–30, 1673
 Beri, Dayaram 986–7, 989, 1051ⁿ¹
 Bhadreswar trade union struggle 1017
Bhagvadgita 1234
 Bharadwaj, R.D. 1073–4, 1092, 1106, 1110, 1376ⁿ¹, 1575, 1594, 1598–1608, 1631, 1661, 1695
 Bhargava, Gopi Chand 1214, 1879–80, 1896
 Bhatt, Harirasad C. 1579
 Bhatta, Raghbar Dyal, 1857
 Bhattacharji, Biren 1051
 Bhayyas 1096
 Bhobra 1266
 Bhola Ram 1870, 1875
 Bhopatkar, L.B. 1915
 Bihar, 1745; communal riots, 1780; Congress Muslims, 1786; Congress Socialist Party (CSP), 1167–8ⁿ²; Hindu Sabha, 1858–9, 1908; Labour Enquiry Committee, 1011, 1049; Legislature 1326; Moneylender's Act, 1175; Provincial Congress Committee 1174–5; Provincial Hindu Conference 1858–9; Provincial Trade Union Congress 1042–3; Socialist Party and Pant resolution 1544
 Bihar Press Workers' Federation 1011
 Bihari, Maulana Asim 1301
 Bihari, Maulana Nuruddin 1396, 1412–13, 1673
 Bihariji Mills 1028
 Bilthare, N.P. 1205
 Bird and Co. 1300
 Birla, G.D. 1211–13, 1402–6, 1758
 Bismil, Ram Prasad 1565ⁿ¹
 Biswas, Kali Krishna 988
 Black Ordinance 990
 Blandy, K.N. 1358
 Bolshevism 1605
 Bombay: Communists 982; District Local Boards Act 1778, 1785; Industrial Disputes Act 982; labour movement 1056–7; Municipal Amendment Act 1778, 1785; Provincial Muslim League 1246; Sholapur Conference 1302, 1778–9, 1785; riots (1927 and 1929), 1761; Suburban Students' Union 1492; taxation, 1063; textile workers struggle, 1000, 1022–4, 1052, 1070, 1076; Trade Disputes Act, 983, 1016; Trade Disputes Bill, 988; Trade Union Congress 1723
 Bombay Mills 1035
 Bose, Buddhadeva 1476, 1477, 1478
 Bose, Hemanta Kumar 1265, 1555, 1595
 Bose, M.N. 1872
 Bose, Mrinal Kanti 1051ⁿ²
 Bose, Sarat Chandra 1251ⁿ¹, 1259, 1266, 1267, 1269–70, 1273, 1298, 1533, 1542, 1546, 1551, 1562, 1574, 1660, 1682, 1703–4, 1884–7
 Bose, Subhas Chandra 991, 1003–5, 1051ⁿ², 1188, 1190, 1191, 1192, 1194, 1197, 1201–03, 1204–5, 1206, 1208, 1210–13, 1214, 1215–18, 1227–30, 1231–3, 1247–52, 1258, 1259ⁿ³, 1260, 1261, 1266, 1284–85, 1290, 1291–2, 1296, 1298–9, 1302, 1306, 1318–19, 1322, 1328, 1338, 1339–41, 1342, 1346, 1363–4, 1367, 1368–9, 1370–1, 1373–4, 1388, 1397, 1441, 1455, 1469–70, 1475, 1487–8, 1492, 1493–7, 1498–1503, 1504–7, 1517, 1532, 1539–41, 1546, 1550, 1552, 1558, 1572, 1575, 1580, 1586, 1590–6, 1600, 1608–9, 1611–12, 1620, 1622, 1624, 1627–8, 1630, 1631, 1639–40, 1646, 1656–7, 1659–60, 1661, 1668, 1672, 1678–9, 1681, 1682, 1683–4, 1685, 1695–7, 1701, 1703–4, 1705–7, 1711–14, 1715, 1719, 1721, 1723–4, 1734–6, 1789, 1797, 1847, 1878, 1884–7; ban of Congress 1708–10; expulsion from Congress 1378–9; and Gandhi, correspondence 1267–78; pleading for mass struggle 1730–1; resignation from Congress Presidentship 1293–5; in Peshawar 1638–9

- bourgeoisie 991, 1581–5, 1601, 1643, 1645–6, 1701
 Brabourne Baron 1204–5
 Bradley, Ben 1727
 Brahmayya, G. 1452, 1462–5
 Brelvi, Syed Abdulla 1392, 1412–14
 bribery and corruption 986, 1094, 1783, 1845, 1907
 British: armed forces 1648; Communist Party 1511;
 Conservative Party 1331–2; Court of Justice,
 1254–6; foreign policy, 1735; Labour Party 1332;
 textile workers 1064
 Brussels Conference against War and Fascists 1050
 Buchiraju, K. 1372
 Bukhari, Maulana Ataullah Shah 1246, 1359
 bureaucracy 994–8, 1052, 1080, 1498, 1530, 1565,
 1675, 1684, 1709
 Butler, Mr 1030
- Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act 1758, 1876,
 1916
 Caman, M.F. 1029
 campaign politics 1073
 capitalism, capitalists 986, 989, 990, 1029, 1038,
 1071, 1076, 1079–80, 1082, 1106, 1475, 1477, 1666
 Carey, Mr 1459
 Caste Disabilities Removal Act 1220
 Caveesher, Sardul Singh 1251ⁿ¹, 1349, 1595ⁿ¹,
 1661
 Cawnpore. *See* Kanpur
 Central Jute Mill Mazdoor Union 1091
 Central Legislative Assembly 1209
 Central Legislature 1350, 1358
 Chagla, M.C. 1421
 Chakraborty, Narendranath 1265
 Chakraborty, Nripen 1051ⁿ¹
 Chakravarti, Amiya 1334–8
 Chalapathi Rau, M. 1259ⁿ¹
 Chalisgaon: trade union struggle 1017, 1065
 Chaman Lal, Diwan 1213–14
 Chamber of Commerce 1063
 Chamberlain, Neville 1010, 1324, 1331, 1365, 1662,
 1695, 1768
 Chanda, A.K. 1027
 Chandra, H.B. 1011, 1054
 Chandriah, T.V. 1043, 1046
 Chandrika Prasad 1048
 Chapman, E.F.G. 1077
 Chatfield Committee 1853
 Chatkal Mazdoor Union 1050–1
 Chatterjee, B.C. 1891, 1892, 1910, 1917
 Chatterjee, Bimal 1899
 Chatterjee, Kshitish Prasad 1555
 Chatterjee, N.C. 1898, 1915
 Chattopadhyay, Kamaladevi 1203, 1483, 1488ⁿ¹,
 1168–70, 1186–7, 1727
- Chaturvedi, Brijbihari 1908
 Chaube, R.K. 1346
 Chauri Chaura case 1085, 1731
 Cheda, Khimji 1595
 Chedlal, Thakur 1341
 Chelmsford, Lord Frederick John Napier 1413
 Chenchiah, 1837
 Chetty, B. Venkatachalam 1483ⁿ³
 Chetty, Shanmukham 1038
 Chhatari, Nawab of 1104, 1773–4, 1784
 Chiang-Kai-Shek 983, 1643
 Child Marriage Restraint (Sarda) Act (1939) 1169,
 1221, 1224–5
 China, Chinese 1062, 1508; capitalism 1644;
 communism 1525; Communist Party 983, 1525;
 Red Army 1525; Revolution 1643
 Chirala: police and bureaucracy 995–6
 Chitale, V.D. 1638, 1672
 Chittagong Armoury Raid case 1268ⁿ³
 Chitti, M. 1457
 Chittivalasa firing case 1456
 Chittivalasa Jute Mills 994, 996; labour dispute
 997; Labour Union 996; police firing on workers
 994–6
 Chota Nagpur 1325–7; educational facilities 1327;
 irrigational facilities 1327–8
 Choudhary, Ashrafuddin 1396, 1265–6, 1594
 Choudhary, Nabakrishna 1513
 Chowdhury, Nawabzada Syed Husain Ali 1684
 Choudhary, Valmiki 1785
 Chouhan, Thakur Laxman Singh 1205, 1341
 Christianity 1360, 1387, 1910
 Churchill, Winston 1331
 Civil Disobedience movement 1085, 1094ⁿ¹, 1233,
 1241ⁿ¹, 1262, 1273, 1277, 1346, 1387, 1394, 1407,
 1417–18, 1455, 1457, 1463, 1493ⁿ², 1495ⁿ¹, 1516ⁿ¹,
 1524, 1526, 1530, 1547ⁿ¹, 1558, 1566ⁿ⁴, 1637,
 1725, 1735, 1888, 1892, 1948; suspension 1955–6
 civil liberties 992, 1061, 1105, 1185, 1263, 1286,
 1329, 1342, 1363, 1397, 1479–80, 1502, 1525,
 1527, 1533, 1538, 1533, 1577, 1587, 1599
 civil war, 1688, 1701, 1825, 1863
 class approach, class forces, 1101, 1319, 1580, 1583,
 1606, 1643–7, 1661, 1701, 1702
 coal mines workers 1049
 Code of Muslim Law 1254–6
 coir factory workers of Travancore 1010
 Communal Award 1404, 1748, 1763, 1805, 1861,
 1863, 1879, 1886, 1891, 1898–9, 1901, 1908,
 1911–12, 1915–16
 communalism 990, 1050, 1106, 1187, 1304, 1475,
 1478, 1481, 1623, 1688, 1745–6, 1750, 1760–4,
 1791, 1799, 1877, 1879; communal and sectarian
 politics 1741^{ff}; communal conflicts/riots 1057,

- 1288, 1320, 1502, 1576, 1625, 1780;—in Gaya 1787, 1864–76; communal harmony/unity 1282, 1401, 1420, 1573;—suggestions on promotion 1770–1; communal zones, 1861;—solution of communal problem, 1832–2; and Muslim League 1862–3; system of representation 1891; in United Provinces 1759–60, 1771–2
- Communism, Communists 981, 1020, 1024, 1049, 1103–04, 1237–38, 1295, 1297, 1319, 1379–80, 1472–6, 1484–6, 1495–6, 1504–6, 1508–15, 1521, 1522, 1525, 1534, 1540, 1542–3, 1547, 1559–60, 1571–8, 1580, 1584, 1595, 1603, 1615–17, 1625, 1636–7, 1643, 1650, 1664, 1666, 1668, 1671, 1673, 1674, 1689, 1703, 1708–10, 1712, 1722–6, 1727, 1729; in China, 1728; and the Congress, 1484–8; resolutions for All India Congress Committee (AICC) 1631–3; at Tripuri 1534
- Communist International 1511
- Communist Party (CP) 1011, 1014, 1291, 1318, 1737
- Communist Party of India (CPI) 1050, 1051, 1068ⁿ¹, 1294, 1508, 1524–5, 1532, 1584, 1594, 1631–2, 1683, 1721–30; demand to legalize 1543–4, 1553–7; government ban 1615–17
- Compensation Act 986, 987
- complete independence (*purna swaraj*) 1167, 1234–6, 1243, 1271, 1308, 1518, 1572, 1619, 1739, 1883, 1920
- Conciliation Board 1011, 1012–13, 1039–40, 1041, 1081–2, 1099
- Congress Socialist Party (CSP) 981, 982ⁿ², 984, 1018–21, 1051, 1227, 1249, 1250, 1260, 1267, 1269–70, 1283ⁿ⁴, 1294, 1318, 1331, 1367ⁿ¹, 1371, 1472–5, 1483, 1484, 1485–6, 1495–6, 1509, 1517–19, 1521–3, 1533, 1544, 1545, 1549–50, 1552, 1553, 1559, 1571, 1580, 1594, 1610–11, 1617, 1620, 1628, 1632, 1636–7, 1647, 1650, 1664–6, 1667–71, 1670–1, 1672, 1673, 1689, 1702–3, 1708–10, 1712, 1716, 1723–4, 1737; Delhi Conference, 1658–9, 1664;—Presidential address 1654–6; neutrality at Tripuri 1532; in old role 1682. *See also* Indian national Congress (INC)
- Constituent Assembly 988, 1180, 1350–2, 1392–3, 1401, 1402–5, 1407, 1410, 1416–17, 1418, 1424–5, 1432, 1447, 1520, 1548, 1549, 1590, 1734, 1739, 1827–9, 1831, 1838, 1883, 1908
- Constitution for India 988, 1182, 1185, 1350–1, 1353, 1507, 1548, 1549, 1817–18, 1841–2
- constitutionalism 1181, 1183, 1193, 1527, 1612, 1653–4, 1696, 1709; and compromise 1584–5
- contract system 993
- conversions to Christianity 1334
- Cooper, Duff 1331
- Copper Corporation Workers Union 1042–3
- corruption. *See* bribery and corruption
- cotton duty 1063, 1066; raw cotton, new duty 1062
- cotton prices 1064
- Council of State 1321
- Central Provinces Muslim League 1745–6, 1751
- Craik, 1745, 1750ⁿ¹
- Criminal Law Amendment Act (1908) 1510, 1615, 1688
- Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) 1012–13, 1029, 1030, 1048, 1049, 1060, 1077, 1081, 1108, 1110, 1714, 1742, 1754, 1781, 1857, 1865, 1869, 1871, 1880, 1930, 1931–2, 1948, 1955, 1957
- Cripps, Stafford 1283, 1469, 1812
- Cultural United Front 1475–8
- Czechoslovakia 1366, 1384, 1621, 1833
- Dala, A.D. 1052
- Daladier 1010
- Dalal, A.R. 1003
- Damodar Das 987
- Dandi. *See* salt satyagraha
- Dange, S.A. 1005, 1009, 1037–8, 1686
- Dar al-ulum 1241ⁿ¹, 1429
- Das Gupta, Amiya Kumar 1555
- Das Gupta, Biren 1555
- Das Gupta, Satyabrata 1052
- Das, C.R. 1205ⁿ², 1232, 1290, 1298, 1329, 1351
- Das, Gopal 1554
- Dastur, H.P. 998–1002
- Datta, Akhil Chandra 1382
- Dave, Jayaman 1579
- Dave, Kapil M. 1578
- day of deliverance 1423–4, 1429–31, 1830–1, 1834, 1923; Muslim condemnation 1421–3
- Dayabhaga 1382
- Dayanandaraju, K. 1457
- De Valera 1079, 1322
- de-colonization 1582–3
- Defence of India Ordinance 1077, 1099
- Defence of India Rules 1077, 1726, 1728
- Delhi: Socialist conference 1654–6, 1658–9
- democracy 1075, 1081–3, 1168, 1177, 1182, 1183, 1184–6, 1237, 1261, 1284, 1297, 1320–2, 1339, 1346–7, 1363, 1377, 1391, 1397, 1422, 1424, 1494, 1525, 1530–1, 1537, 1538, 1569, 1591, 1616, 1622, 1662, 1695, 1746, 1799, 1802, 1811, 1825, 1842, 1850, 1900, 1915, 1919; democratic rights 1166, 1182, 1288, 1303, 1320, 1343, 1346–7, 1363, 1370, 1373, 1399; of workers 989–91, 1009–10, 1016, 1103, 1111
- Democratic Coalition Party 1844
- Deo, Shankar Rao 1189

- Dera Ismail Khan 1254–57
 Desai, Bhulabhai 1025, 1189, 1196, 1281–2, 1298, 1350, 1371, 1376, 1410, 1498, 1504
 Desai, D.K. 1056, 1075, 1096
 Desai, Mahadev 1703
 Desai, Morarji 1425
 Desai, S.K. 10656
 Deshmukh, G.V. 1056, 1076, 1169–70, 1209, 1278–9, 1379, 1382
 Deshpande, Balkrishna Ramakant 1492
 Deshpande, Gangadhar Rao 992, 1006, 1493–4
 Dev, Acharya Narendra 1073, 1191ⁿ³, 1198, 1200, 1250–51, 1283, 1307, 1319–20, 1365–6, 1369, 1550, 1551, 1654–5, 1664, 1668–9, 1682, 1695, 1728–29
 Dev, Nishi Kanta 1050, 1051ⁿ¹
 Dev, Sarala Bala 1617
 Devadoss, David 1221–23
 Dey, Jagat Bandhu 986, 988
 Dhal, Naba Kishore 986
 Dharampal, Ghazi 1868
 Dhenkanal agitation 1513
Dhinamani 1067, 1068
 Dhulia trade union struggle 1017
 Digboi workers' strike. *See* Assam Oil Company, strike
 Digha Workers' Union 1011
 Diocesan Press, Madras 997
 District Board nominations 1326
 Divatia, Mr 1009
 divorce 1169–70, 1219, 1222
 Divorce Bill for Muslim women 1242, 1379
 Dominion Status 1403, 1739–40, 1795–6, 1798, 1800, 1804, 1815, 1842, 1900, 1902, 1913–21
 Dongre, Martin 1075
 Doraaiswamy, A. 1043–4., 1483
 Dornkal: railway workers conditions 1043–4
 Durrani, Ubaidullah 1832
 Dutt Mazumdar, Niharendu 1258, 1300, 1536, 1550, 1552, 1594, 1646
 Dutt, Iswar 1231
 Dutt, J.D. 990
 Dutta, Babu Nirmal Chandra 990
 Dutta, Biresh 1267
 Dutta, Sudhindranath 1476
 Dutta Gupta, Mira 1266, 1300
 Dyer, General 1845

 economic: considerations 1019, 1063–4; crisis 1072, 1598; exploitation 1187; poverty 1238; reconstruction 1182; struggle 1014–15, 1764
 Eden, Anthony 1331
 education: of industrial workers 998; of Muslims 1769–70; of women 1279–80

 Elango, C.P. 1368
 Elgin Mills, Kanpur 1058, 1077, 1094, 1106, 1110
 Ellenborough, Edward Law 1360
 Emergency Powers Act 1932, 991
 Emergency Scheme 1866
 Emerson 1077
 Employers' Association 1057, 1077, 1083, 1085, 1093–4, 1106
 Empress Mills, Nagpur 1010
 Engels, Friedrich 1473, 1485
 Enquiry Committee 988, 1048, 1098–1100, 1102, 1104, 1105, 1109–10
 Erskine 1230
 European politics 1262
 Ewart, J.M. 1937
 Extension of Factories Act 986

 factionalism 1702
 Factories Act 987, 1008, 1011, 1032, 1068, 1226
 Faiz, Shah Abdul 1554, 1674
 Fakhri, Shah Mahomed 1674–5
 Faqhri, Maulana 1305
 Farroqi 1490
 Faruq, Muhammad 1798
 fascism 1010, 1013, 1050, 1081, 1237, 1260, 1335, 1365, 1476, 1488, 1502, 1539, 1584, 1590, 1663, 1669, 1695; in Italy 1262
 Fazl-i-Hussain 1746
 federal scheme/Federaion issue 984, 988, 1008, 1183–5, 1190–2, 1195–6, 1197–8, 1202, 1203, 1205, 1214–15, 1231, 1233, 1245, 1247–8, 1253, 1260, 1262, 1272, 1288, 1290, 1297, 1302, 1324, 1345, 1481–2, 1494, 1498, 1502, 1504, 1506–7, 1510, 1518–19, 1520, 1524, 1527–8, 1531, 1570, 1646, 1691, 1696, 1708, 1760, 1769, 1773, 1802, 1810–11, 1820–1, 1840, 1853, 1894, 1909; Congress and 1572–3, 1594, 1625, 1785, 1790; Muslims on, 1766–7, 1792–4
 Federation of Indian Students Societies 1511
 Fiqh 1255–6
 Firoz, Abu Lulu 1929
 Fort William Jute Mill, Shibpur 1095
 Forward Bloc (FB) 1074, 1318–19, 1344, 1370, 1371, 1387, 1553, 1590–5, 1608–9, 1610–11, 1612–13, 1614, 1619–20, 1624–5, 1628–31, 1634–7, 1638, 1639–42, 1643, 1650, 1659–60, 1661, 1662, 1664, 1668, 1671, 1672–3, 1683, 1687–8, 1696–1700, 1702–6, 1712, 1714, 1716, 1729, 1730–1, 1734–6, 1737, 1797; and Left unity 1625, 1626–7, 1720, 1724; objectives 1706–7; philosophical background 1705–6; support of K.F. Nariman 1595–6; two-fold task 1596
 freedom of speech 986–7, 1101, 1179, 1245, 1363, 1377, 1397, 1525, 1587, 1719, 1783

freedom struggle. *See* national movement
 fundamental rights 1920

Gadgil, P.V. 1638

Ganapat Rai 1880–2

Gandhi Seva Sangha 1006, 1024, 1035, 1046,
 1248, 1297, 1303, 1484, 1591, 1592, 1594,
 1706

Gandhi, Bhogilal 1557

Gandhi, Kasturba 1280

Gandhi, M.K., Gandhism 981, 1005ⁿ², 1020, 1025,
 1085, 1166, 1175, 1197ⁿ¹, 1201–4, 1206–7, 1209,
 1210–13, 1214, 1215–16, 1230, 1234–8, 1240,
 1243, 1248–9, 1251–3, 1260–1, 1263, 1265–6,
 1267–78, 1281, 1284–5, 1287–90, 1294–5, 1299,
 1302–3, 1306, 1322, 1324, 1325, 1332, 1334–6,
 1342, 1348, 1350–2, 1369, 1370, 1377, 1381,
 1385ⁿ¹, 1393, 1398–9, 1400, 1402–6, 1410, 1411,
 1416, 1417–18, 1429, 1436, 1437, 1441, 1446, 1457,
 1460, 1469–70, 1479, 1480, 1487, 1492, 1493–6,
 1497, 1498, 1499–1500, 1502, 1503, 1504–6,
 1517–18, 1520, 1522–3, 1526–7, 1531, 1532,
 1539–41, 1545–6, 1551, 1553, 1558, 1561–2, 1564,
 1568, 1571, 1574, 1579–81, 1582–3, 1588–90, 1591,
 1593–4, 1597–8, 1609, 1614, 1620, 1622–3, 1624,
 1638, 1639–40, 1642, 1645–6, 1659–60, 1662,
 1666, 1671, 1675, 1677, 1680–1, 1682, 1688, 1693,
 1706, 1708–9, 1712, 1720, 1723, 1728, 1739, 1742,
 1743, 1748–9, 1750, 1752, 1755, 1756ⁿ¹, 1761, 1769,
 1730–1, 1732–3, 1734–35, 1785, 1788, 1794–7,
 1806, 1808–9, 1825, 1827–8, 1829, 1830, 1832–3,
 1837, 1854, 1860, 1863, 1878, 1879, 1883,
 1888–90, 1892, 1902, 1909–11, 1918, 1924; -
 versus Bose, fundamental differences 1611–12;
 and the Congress Programme 1180–3;
 leadership, 1250–1, 1291–3; after Tripuri
 session 1258–9; statement to press 1339–41,
 1374–5

Gandhi, Narandas 1394

Gangadhar Rao, 1484

Gangohi, Rashid Ahmad, 1359

Gangpur 1623

Ganguly, Bepin Behary 1300, 1594

Ganguly, Prabhat 1595ⁿ¹

Ganguly, Pratul 1594

Ganguly, Suresh 1555

Gani, Abdul 1345

Ganpat Rai 1856, 1889–90

Garhwali, Chandra Singh 1565

Gauba, K.L. 1247ⁿ¹

Gaya communal riots 1787, 1864–76

Gazdar, Muhammad Hashim 1905

George V, 1204ⁿ¹

George, Lloyd 1799

Germany: and Britain war 1079–80, 1097, 1302;
 Nazi regime/Nazism 1075, 1262, 1321, 1366,
 1539, 1695, 1877

Ghadar Party 1482ⁿ¹, 1566ⁿ⁶

Ghafoor, Ahmad 1786

Ghani, Maulvi Muhammad 1872

Ghate, S.V. 1067–8, 1726

Ghaznavi, A.H. 1775–7

Ghaznavi, Mauulana Mohammad Daud 1244–6

Ghiyasuddin 1789

Ghose, Ajoy 1727

Ghose, Phani 986–7, 988

Ghose, Surendra Mohan 1026

Ghosh Chaudhury T.K. 1029

Ghosh, Ajoy Kumar 1376ⁿ¹, 1526, 1552–3, 1571–8,
 1725

Ghosh, Aurobindo 1711, 1893ⁿ¹

Ghosh, Devendra Nath 1555

Ghosh, Jyotish 1673

Ghosh, Prafulla Chandra 982ⁿ³, 1266, 1298,
 1332–3, 1378–9, 1594, 1681ⁿ¹

Ghosh, Rash Behari 1231

Ghosh, S.K. 1027

Ghosh, Tushar Kanti 1661

Ghulam Farid, Maulana 1246

Gibbon, C.E. 1194, 1554

Girni Kamgar Union (GKU), Bombay 1007ⁿ¹,
 1022–4, 1033ⁿ¹, 1034–6, 1037–8, 1061–2, 1068ⁿ¹,
 1073

Gogoi, Bhuban Chandra 1438

Gokak District Police Act 991–2

Gokak Mills Workers Union 992, 1005–7

Gokhale, Gopal Krishna 1715

Golmuri Tinplate Workers Union 1042–3

Gokulchand 1854

Gokuldas, Morarji 1035

Goonda Act 1043, 1052

Gopal, Sipahimalan 1557

Gopalan, A.K. 1018–21, 1446ⁿ⁵, 1482

Gopalan, K.P.R. 1446ⁿ⁵

Gopalareddi 1458

Gore, N.G. 1638

Gorganwi, Naseem 1786

Goswami, Tulsi Chandra 1264, 1265, 1661

Government of India Act (1935), 1243, 1287, 1289,
 1321, 1404, 1418, 1471, 1519, 1537, 1537, 1570,
 1573, 1622, 1626, 1632–3, 1645, 1795–6, 1820,
 1842

Government Printing Press Workers' Union,
 1008

Govindananda 1594

Guidallo, Rani of Nagas 1617–18

- Gujarat: Harijan Sevak Sangh 1426; Mahasabha Seva Dal 1427; Provincial Congress Committee (GPCC), 1364, 1425–9; Radoical Youths Association 1588; Woman's Conference 1406–7
- Gulshan Rai 1880
- Gupta, Deshbandhu 1247ⁿ¹, 1274
- Gupta, J.C. 1396
- Gupta, Manmath Nath 1554, 1673, 1674–5
- Gupta, R.K., 1479–81
- Gupta, Raghavavarao 1714
- Gwyer, Sir Maurice 1272, 1273, 1623, 1808
- Habib Mills, Bombay 1039
- Habib, Ahmad 1346, 1875
- Hafeez, M.A. 1830
- Haig, Harry 1206–8, 1383–4, 1743, 1750, 1759–60, 1771–2, 1792–4, 1792–4, 1936–44, 1949–54
- Hajara, K.K. 1098–1100
- Hakim, Abdul 1429
- Hakim, D.K. 1345
- Hali System 1428–9
- Halifax, Lord 1331
- Hallett, Maurice 1333–4, 1744–5, 1750ⁿ¹, 1754–5, 1773–4, 1779–84, 1787–8, 1790–2
- Hameed, Abdul 1043–4, 1046, 1051ⁿ¹
- Hamid, Hafiz Abdul 1429
- Hamid, Kazi Abdul, 1384, 1751
- Hancox, L.P. 1077
- handloom weavers of Kwagan Nadu and Srimushnam 1056
- Hanifi School of Muslim Law 1255
- Hanumantha Rao, K. 1026, 1483
- Haque, Azizul 1849–50
- Haque, Maulvi A. Nurul 1438
- Hardinge, Lord, 1890ⁿ¹
- Hari Singh, Maharaja of Kashmir 1768
- Harijan* 1387–8
- Harijans 1035, 1331, 1733, 1824, 1859; Harijan Movement 1731; separate electorate for 1794–5
- Harisarvothama Rao, G. 1456–7
- Haroon, Abdullah 1883
- Harper, G.M. 1929–33, 1945, 1947–8
- Hasan, Abdul 1852
- Hasan, Ahmed 1751
- Hasan, Maulana Mahmud 1246ⁿ⁴, 1488ⁿ¹
- Hasan, Syed Manzoor 1430
- Hasan, Wazir 1777
- Hashmi, Khan Bahadur Zakaria 1789
- Hassain, Jaffar 1928
- Hassan, Wali 1786
- Hastings Jute Mill 1095
- Hathras: workers' strike 1098
- Hazaribagh worker's struggle, 1022
- Hazra, Mr 1041
- Hegde, 1278
- Hidayatullah, Ghulam Haider 1240
- Hindu(s), Hinduism 1245, 1252–53, 1255, 1273, 1291, 1293, 1334, 1348, 1358–60, 1387, 1471, 1481–2, 1677, 1742–3, 1744, 1750, 1756, 1759–64, 1765–6, 1768–71, 1780–1, 1784, 1790–2, 1799–1800, 1802, 1809, 1814, 1822, 1824–5, 1826–8, 1833, 1840–3; caste system 1842; and Congress, 1891–3; marriages, legislation 1218–27; militia 1918; and Muslim relations 1366, 1397, 1674, 1761;—compromise 1748–9, 1752;—tension/conflict, 1180, 1336, 1360–1, 1641, 1760–1, 1771–2, 1780, 1784, 1830, 1837, 1855, 1873;—unity, 1240, 1401, 1640–1, 1694–5, 1732, 1836, 1863, 1882, 1883, 1918; orthodoxy, 1278; social code, 1226; UP premier's failure to protect 1880; women, 1257, 1278–9;—right to divorce, 1169, 1278; Women's Right to Property Act (1939) 1381–3
- Hindu Mahasabha 1223–4, 1267, 1291, 1387, 1491, 1755, 1761, 1804–6, 1835, 1842, 1853, 1854, 1855–6, 1859–63, 1868, 1880–2, 1892, 1898, 1902–4, 1908, 1910, 1912–13, 1921, 1923, 1926; and Congress, 1884–9; resolutions, 1913–21; strategy, 1889; and war, 1889–90, 1900–2
- Hindu Youth League 1491
- Hindustan Scouts Association, 1897
- Hindustan Seva Dal 1456
- Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) 1729
- Hindustan Standard* 1203
- Hindustani Academy of Allahabad 1477
- Hindustani 1243, 1755; as Lingua Franca 1477–8
- Hiremath, N.B. 1483
- Hisam-ud-Din, Sheikh, 1246, 1253
- Hitler, Adolf 1335, 1492, 1727, 1768, 1773, 1895
- Hizbullah* movement 1895
- Hoare, Sammuel 1815
- Hockenhull, F.W. 1027
- Homi, Manik, 1003–4
- Hooghly trade union struggle 1017, 1050
- Horwill Report 995
- Hossain Imam 1224–5
- Hubback, John 1218, 1293, 1813
- Hukumchand group of mills 1095
- human rights 1059, 1102
- Humphreys, J.H. 1321
- Huq, Afzal 1244–5, 1246, 1253, 1265, 1281
- Huq, A.K. Fazlul 1253, 1358, 1684, 1714, 1759ⁿ², 1763, 1806–7, 1814–15, 1836, 1848, 1892, 1912, 1876, 1878
- Huq, S. Abdul, 990, 991, 1046, 1360, 1564, 1597

- Husain, Afzal 1775
 Husain, Haji Syed Muhammad 1798
 Husain, Maulana Altaf 1684
 Husain, Maulana Nasir 1954
 Husain, Maulvi Mubarak 1429
 Husain, Sheikh Sadiq 1430
 Hussain, Ahmed 1758
 Hussain, Akbar 1043–4, 1046, 1240
 Hussain, Asghar 1957
 Hussain, Ghulam 1844–5
 Hussain, Khan Bahadur Muazammudin 1757
 Hussain, Munshi Rahmat 1430
 Hutchison, Lester 1727
 Hyderabad Satyagraha 1859, 1915
- Ibrahim, Hafiz Muhammad 1939
 Imam, Hossain 1256
 Imam, Saiyid Jafar 1866–7
 Imarat-Sharia Phulawari Sharif 1361
 imperialism 984, 988, 990–1, 1008, 1010, 1019, 1029, 1060–1, 1066, 1068, 1072–4, 1079, 1166, 1181–3, 1184–6, 1187, 1243, 1245, 1319, 1242, 1253, 1262–63, 1281, 1287–88, 1292, 1295, 1303, 1305–6, 1334–5, 1359–61, 1365, 1367, 1368, 1385ⁿ!, 1398, 1407, 1422, 1438, 1476, 1481, 1486, 1488, 1493–5, 1498–9, 1502, 1503, 1504–7, 1508, 1518, 1520, 1524, 1528–32, 1533, 1537, 1539, 1544, 1549, 1559, 1562, 1565, 1572, 1575–6, 1579, 1581–4, 1601–4, 1623, 1626–7, 1632, 1633, 1634, 1639–40, 1644, 1647–51, 1662, 1666, 1669, 1691, 1679, 1684, 1687, 1696–7, 1701, 1708, 1727, 1732, 1734, 1741, 1760–1, 1764, 1833, 1856; and national bourgeoisie 1598; war plans 1648
 Independence Day 1193–4, 1437–8, 1481; celebrations 1483, 1489–90, 1491–3; Independence pledge 1736–7, 1738
 Independent Labour Party 1035
 India League 1511
Indian Express 1067, 1068
 Indian Jute Mills Association 1090
 Indian labour in international arena 1030–3
 Indian Merchants' Chamber 1025
 Inamdars 1097
 Indian National Congress (INC) 1174–5, 1208–9, 1210–11, 1212, 1243–6, 1289–94, 1306, 1307, 1332, 1334–8, 1342, 1358–62, 1371–3, 1373–4, 1376–7, 1384, 1385–6, 1387–8, 1392, 1397, 1399, 1418, 1419–20, 1422, 1423, 1430, 1452, 1457, 1472–6, 1482, 1484, 1485, 1487, 1508, 1510, 1520, 1521–3, 1529–31, 1544–6, 1554–5, 1556, 1568–9, 1572, 1582–3, 1587, 1590, 1593–4, 1596, 1599–1600, 1602, 1604–7, 1612, 1619, 1625, 1629–30, 1638–42, 1645, 1647, 1662–4, 1678–80, 1684, 1685, 1686, 1688, 1690, 1697–8, 1705, 1706, 1718, 1719–21, 1725, 1741–5, 1746–8, 1752, 1756, 1758, 1761–4, 1767, 1775, 1776–7, 1780–1, 1787, 1790–2, 1805, 1806–7, 1809, 1811, 1814, 1815, 1826, 1830–1, 1837, 1838, 1840, 1842–4, 1858, 1863, 1923, 1940; All India Congress Committee (AICC), 989, 1012, 1026, 1037–8, 1052, 1068, 1176, 1177, 1081–2, 1189, 1194–5, 1196, 1197, 1198–9, 1201, 1203, 1204, 1206, 1212, 1214, 1215–16, 1227–8, 1229, 1232, 1241, 1247, 1250, 1251, 1252, 1257–8, 1266, 1268–71, 1272, 1275, 1277, 1281–2, 1284–6, 1287–9, 1292, 1293, 1294–7, 1298–1300, 1301–3, 1307–8, 1319–20, 1322, 1323–4, 1325, 1328–9, 1331, 1343–7, 1352, 1354, 1363, 1370, 1371–3, 1374, 1377, 1388, 1396, 1401, 1408, 1428, 1432–3, 1439, 1441–2, 1447–50, 1454, 1457, 1460, 1469, 1472–4, 1476, 1501–2, 1505, 1507, 1512, 1527, 1530, 1535–6, 1541, 1545, 1550, 1559, 1561, 1565, 1572, 1574, 1585, 1597–8, 1608, 1613, 1620, 1622, 1624, 1626, 1631–3, 1634, 1643, 1647–53, 1656–7, 1661, 1664, 1669, 1671, 1673, 1675, 1678–9, 1680, 1682, 1687, 1689, 1690, 1692, 1694, 1696, 1705, 1708–9, 1720, 1728, 1736–7, 1829, 1891, 1690, 1692;—resolutions 1344–5, 1349, 1597–8;—and after 1332–3;—resolution, defiance 1349, 1376;—Nehru on defiance 1338–9;—appeal for enrolment 1283; ban on Subhas C. Bose 1708–10; bogus membership and corruption 1176–9, 1320, 1538, 1567; Bombay session 1651; and businessmen 1025; Calcutta session 1293–4, 1634, 1647–8; Constitution 1260ⁿ!, 1308–17, 1320, 1352–6, 1457, 1527–8, 1572–3, 1576, 1589, 1590, 1592, 1606, 1662; Constitution Sub-Committee 1307, 1318–19, 1345, 1628, 1656; constructive programme 1182; corruption 1200, 1252, 1258, 1271, 1273, 1323, 1330, 1627, 1640; crisis 1330–2, 1517–19, 1530, 1621–5, 1656–7; democratization 1568; District Congress Committees (DCCs) 1179, 1431–2, 1434, 1439, 1530, 1620, 1692, 1694, 1719; elections to annual session 1165–8; Election manifesto 1060–1, 1104, 1714, 1738–40; election system 1199–1200; fight for national freedom 1365–6; Faizpur Resolution, 1739; Gandhism and 1180–3; Gaya session 1364; government stand to protect culture, religion and tradition of aboriginals 1325–8; and Hindus 1891–3, 1908–12; Haripura session 1198–9, 1215, 1247, 1263–4, 1274, 1398, 1429, 1480, 1499, 1535, 1538, 1660, 1707, 1729; Jalpaiguri resolution 1249; Karachi session 1525, 1557, 1845; and labour/workers' struggle 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 988, 989, 992, 995–6, 1003, 1009, 1012, 1016–18, 1019–21,

- 1023–4, 1030, 1045–6, 1084, 1100, 1102, 1103–4, 1106, 1108, 1110–11; Lahore session 1352, 1524, 1547; leadership 1381; Lucknow session (1936) 1180, 1183, 1217; Medical Mission to China 1728; membership, enrolment 1368;—rules 1356;—in Maharashtra 1386;—in urban and rural areas 1412; Ministerial activity 1184–5; Muslims and 1179–80, 1798; and Muslim League 1755–6, 1789, 1808; Muslim League Pact (1916) 1413–14; Muslim Press, alleged discrimination against 1845–7; for national freedom 1365–6; Parliamentary Sub Committee, 1188, 1230, 1458; Presidential election controversy 1187–8, 1189–93, 1197–8, 1203, 1204–5, 1206–9, 1212, 1368–70, 1498–9, 1504–5, 1507, 1526, 1534, 1539; problems, 1233–9; Provincial Congress Committees (PCCs) 1304, 1323–4, 1331, 1338, 1345, 1346, 1349, 1366, 1448–9, 1458, 1475, 1504, 1505, 1507, 1530, 1620, 1637, 1639, 1648, 1652–3, 1657, 1675, 1680, 1690, 1705, 1711; reforms 1196, 1279, 1307–17, 1320–3, 1332, 1335; regime, condemnation by Jinnah 1833–5; reorganization, 1289; resignation of Ministries 1384–5; and satyagraha 1324–5, 1652; split in Provincial Cabinet, 1266–67; Subjects Committee, 1250, 1258, 1270, 1535–6, 1540–2, 1548, 1551, 1854; Working Committee (CWC), 1012, 1026, 1042, 1057, 1061–2, 1066, 1174, 1177, 1189–91, 1192, 1195, 1197, 1203, 1207, 1211, 1212, 1213, 1216–17, 1218, 1227, 1228–30, 1247, 1249, 1251, 1263, 1266, 1268, 1270–1, 1274–6, 1282, 1302–3, 1318–20, 1323–4, 1331–2, 1349, 1368–9, 1373, 1374–5, 1377, 1393, 1398, 1399–1400, 1406, 1409, 1410, 1411, 1416, 1432–3, 1436, 1437, 1439, 1473–4, 1480, 1484, 1486, 1488, 1493–4, 1498–9, 1501, 1503, 1504, 1507, 1521, 1522, 1523–4, 1526, 1532, 1538–9, 1540–1, 1545, 1551, 1553, 1558–61, 1574, 1601, 1619, 1574, 1579–81, 1601, 1619, 1622–3, 1633, 1648–9, 1653, 1656–7, 1677, 1686, 1708–9, 1711, 1713–4, 1715–16, 1719, 1720, 1721, 1730–1, 1732–3, 1736–7, 1738, 1808, 1829, 1829, 1840, 1841, 1908, 1910;—resolution 1367; Zamindari Agreement in Bihar 1601, 1630
- Indian Penal Code (IPC) 988, 1050, 1358, 1365, 1870, 1875, 1932, 1937
- Indian Press Emergence Powers Act (1931) 1846
- Indian Students Secret Communist Group 1727
- Indian Tea Garden Association 1054
- Indian Trade Union Act (1937–38) 1381
- Indigo Planters 1782
- Indo-British Trade Pact 1023, 1025, 1062–3, 1066, 1069, 1625, 1630, 1631–2, 1691, 1776, 1801
- Indraprakash 1881
- Industrial Disputes Act 1024, 1032
- industrial disputes in British India 1086–9, 1182
- industrial labour: problems 998–1002; unrest 985
- industrialization 1302
- Instrument of Instruction 1772
- International Labour Conference, Geneva 1030–3
- International Labour Organization (ILO) 1030–3
- Iqbal, Muhammad 1800, 1896
- Irfan, Maulana 1766ⁿ¹
- Irish Free State 1322, 1350
- Irwin-Gandhi Pact 1393
- Ishaq, Mufti Mohammad 1430
- Ishaqu, Maulavi Muhammad 1869, 1874
- Islam 1240, 1359, 1305, 1802, 1833, 1953; Islamic law of Khula 1255; Islamic ideal and nationalism 1849–50; *Shariat* 1431
- Islam, Farukul 1684
- Ismail, Maulana Mohammad 1245
- Ispahani, A.H. 1777–8
- Ispahani, M.A.H. 1362ⁿ¹², 1757–9
- Italy-Abyssinian war 1645
- Ittihad Millat* 1103
- Iyengar, A.S.K. 1067–8, 1555
- Iyengar, S. Srinivasa 1230, 1368, 1376–7, 1586, 1661, 1838
- Iyer, C.P. Ramaswami 1889
- J.K. Jute Mills 1057, 1058, 1094
- J.K. Manufacturers 1077, 1094
- Jabbar, Khondkar Abdul 1684
- Jafri, Ali Sardar 1477
- Jaganatha Rao, M. 1372
- Jagirdar, Syed Masood Kadri 1751
- Jahangirabad, Nawab of 1104
- Jain, A.P. 1727
- Jain, Padam Raj 1862
- Jairamdas Doulatram 1189
- Jaiswal, Salik Ram 1554
- Jalil, M.A. 1871
- Jallianwala Bagh massacre 1080
- Jamiyat al-Ansar 1246ⁿ⁵
- Jamiyat al-Ulema 1239–41, 1244–6, 1361, 1385, 1789; and Indian nationalism 1241–3
- Jamiyat al-Ulama-i Hind 1430, 1798, 1841
- Jammu and Kashmir 1742; Hindu minority, 1883–4; Kashmiri Hindus 1882
- Jamshedpur Workers 1003–5
- Japanese: competition 1062; labour system 1093
- Jayakar, M.R. 1853, 1889, 1890
- Jaywant, K.T. 1098
- Jehad* 1104
- Jehangir, Sir Cowasji 1279
- Jennings 1005

- Jha, Shri Narain 1260
 Jinnah, Fatima 1758
 Jinnah, Mohammad Ali 1179–80, 1239–41, 1246, 1283ⁿ³, 1301ⁿ², 1302, 1348, 1358–9, 1361, 1385, 1405, 1413–14, 1416, 1421–4, 1429–31, 1742, 1746, 1748, 1752, 1756ⁿ¹, 1757–9, 1760, 1764–6, 1769, 1773, 1774–5, 1777–8, 1784, 1785, 1789, 1793, 1797, 1799–1800, 1801–3, 1808–14, 1815–16, 1826, 1827–9, 1830–2, 1833–5, 136–7, 1840–2, 1844, 1853ⁿ⁵, 1860, 1863, 1868, 1878, 1890, 1892–3, 1908, 1910, 11918, 1922, 1924, 1944, 1951. *See also* Muslim League
Jizya 1901
 Jog, G.G. 1077
 Joglekar, K.N. 1005, 1054, 1110
 Joint Electorate system 1758
 Joint Parliamentary Committee 1743
 Jones, Sir T. Gavin 1110
 Joshi, K.B. 1008
 Joshi, Lakshman Shastri 1594
 Joshi, N.M. 981, 982–3, 1050, 1054, 1638
 Joshi, P.C. 1009–10, 1072–4, 1376ⁿ¹, 1487–8, 1512, 1529, 1532–4, 1543, 1550, 1610, 1630, 1634–7, 1661, 1668, 1670, 1686, 1695, 1725, 1727
 Jubbulpore Municipal Workers Union 1026–7
 Jubilee Mill, Sewri Zone 1035
 Jute industry of Bengal, workers' struggle 990–1, 996, 1049–51, 1090–2, 1112

 Kabir, Humayun 1283, 1594, 1684, 1710
 Kabir, Jahangir 1684
 Kakomi Mills, Kanpur 1077
 Kakori case 1673
 Kallappa, V.R. 1026
 Kalyan: labour movement 1095–8; Taluka Shetkari Sangh 1096
 Kamal Yar Jung Bahadur, Nawal of Hyderabad 1848–9, 1851
 Kamath, H.V. 1595, 1694
 Kameshwar Singh, Maharaja of Darbhanga 1221
 Kameswara Rao, A. 1482
 Kanpur (Cawnpore) 1438; City Congress Committee 1092–5, 1106; communal riots, 1756–7, 1759, 1856–8, 1862; Conspiracy Case, 1007ⁿ¹; District Students' Conference 1283; Labour Enquiry Committee 1082; labour situation 1092–5; Mazdoor Sabha 1049, 1077–8, 1081, 1082–3, 1084, 1093–4; workers' strikes/struggle, 1013, 1017, 1067, 1070, 1076–81, 1084–5, 1106, 1110
 Kanwar Ram, Bhagat 1905
 Kapadia, Bhagwandas 1376
 Kapoor, Amarnath 1554
 Kapoor, Jaidev 1565–6
 Kapoor, Santosh Chandra 1057, 1110, 1554
 Kara, Maniben 1183–6, 1376
 Karadkar, Minakshi 1492
 Karant, K. Ramakant 1586
 Karhadkar, Minakshi 1008
 Karim, Abdul 1684, 1757
 Karimuddin, Sheikh 1430
 Karnatak: Provincial Congress Committee (KPCC) 992, 1006, 1433–6, 1466, 1483; Provincial Congress Socialist Party (KPCSP) 1483–4
 Karnik, V.B. 1183–6, 1492, 1579ⁿ¹, 1631, 1695, 1737–8
 Karve, Dhondo Keshav 1585
 Kasargod Taluk Peasant Conference 1516
 Kaseem, Abul 1876
 Kasim, Maulana Muhammad 1246
 Kasuri, Abdul Qadir 1489
 Katju, Kailashnath, 985, 1085, 1207, 1289, 1366
 Kaul, Krishna Nath 1862
 Kazipet: railway workers conditions 1043–4
 Kazmi, Mohammed Ahmad 1242
 Kelappa, V.R. 1050
 Kelappan, K. 1444–5
 Kelkar, N.C. 1661
 Kelkar, R. K. 1376
 Kerala: Congress Gandhi Sangham 1451; Congress Socialist Party (KCSP) 1444; Provincial Congress Committee (KPCC) 1444–7, 1450–2, 1482
 Keshvadev 1491
 khadi (khaddar) 1173, 1182, 1266, 1401, 1426, 1432, 1445, 1448, 1483, 1531
 Khaksar movement 1299, 1383–4, 1385ⁿ¹, 1894–5, 1896, 1897
 Khalifas 1937–40, 1944
 Khaliquzzaman, Choudhry 1766–7, 1773, 1835–36
 Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan 1196, 1208, 1286, 1299, 1916
 Khan, Abdul Majid 1423
 Khan, Abdul Rezak 1051ⁿ²
 Khan, Abdur Rahman 1751, 1754
 Khan, Aga 1180, 1240, 1748–9, 1752, 1755–6
 Khan, Babu 1106
 Khan, Ch. Illyas Ahmad 1430
 Khan, Ch. Lutf Ali 1430
 Khan, Gafoor 1046
 Khan, Ghulam Mohammad, 1208, 1557
 Khan, Haji Ismail 1223
 Khan, Hakim Ajmal 1413, 1620
 Khan, Hakim Hazi 1415
 Khan, Hakim Samiullah 1430
 Khan, Hamid 1077, 1283, 1437–8
 Khan, Ibrahim 1754

- Khan, Ismail 1804–6, 1837
 Khan, John 1638
 Khan, K.B. Javad Hussain 996
 Khan, Karimur Raza 1769
 Khan, Khurshid Ali 1794
 Khan, Kubla 1233
 Khan, Nawabzada Liaquat Ali 1745, 1753, 1824–5, 1852ⁿ³
 Khan, M. Tehsin Ali 1430
 Khan, Maulana Akram 1054, 1358, 1757
 Khan, Maulana Zafar Ali 1240, 1895
 Khan, Maulvi Asadullah 1430
 Khan, Mohammad Yamin, 1245, 1774
 Khan, Nawab Mohiuddin, 1751
 Khan, Nawab Siddiqui Ali 1750–1, 1753–4
 Khan, Sher 1554
 Khan, Sikandar Hyat 1253, 1302, 1503, 1741, 1746–8, 1755, 1760, 1764, 1766, 1775, 1778–9, 1784, 1786, 1793, 1801, 1831–2, 1837, 1839–40, 1890, 1892; scheme of federation, 1794–7
 Khan, Syed Ahmad 1359, 1848
 Khand 1095–7
 Khandesh 1189, 1637; textile workers 1067
 Khare, G.P., 1370, 1291, 1570, 1638, 1672, 1701, 1854
 Khedgikar, R.A. 1054
 Kher, B.G. 1005, 1410, 1586, 1893–8
 Khilafat movement 1004ⁿ², 1241ⁿ², 1413, 1488ⁿ¹, 1589, 1852ⁿ³, 1863, 1907ⁿ⁴
 Khstery, Ramkishen 1682
 Khudai Khidamtgars 1361, 1895
 Khuhro, K.B. 1905
 Kidd, Ronald 1727
 Kidwai, Rafi Ahmad 1092, 1206, 1383–4, 1668, 1836–7, 1935, 1940
 Kifayatullah, Mufti 1241, 1245, 1359
 Kisan Sabhas, 1018, 1042, 1049, 1262, 1267, 1297, 1318, 1329, 1371, 1503, 1505, 1509–10, 1531, 1544, 1583, 1589, 1599, 1601, 1605, 1607, 1617, 1647, 1650, 1653, 1658, 1673, 1701–2. *See also* All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS)
 Kitchlew, Saifuddin 1304–5, 1481–2, 1490ⁿ¹, 1594, 1785, 1895
 Koshal, P. Jagdish Mittar 1856
 Kothapet Labour Association 1714
 Koti Reddi, K. 1453
 Kripalani, Acharya J.B. 1189, 1270, 1343, 1346–8, 1469, 1495–6, 1687, 1847, 1885, 1887
 Kripalani, Sucheta, 1279
 Krishak Praja Samiti 1361
 Krishna Menon, V.K. 1283ⁿ⁷, 1816
 Krishna Rao, M.V. 1372
 Krishnamurti, 1021ⁿ², 1547ⁿ¹
 Krishnarao, Mutnuri 1456
 Kulkarni, Shantabai 1673
 Kumar, Atul Chandra 1260ⁿ¹, 1264–5, 1266
 Kumarananad 1594
 Kundanlal 1489
 Kunzru, Hriday Nath 1224–26
 Kurtakoti, Shankar 1483, 1484
 Kushtia Mohini Mills, Bengal 1068–70
 labour and kisan forces 1203–5, 1206–8, 1218, 1230, 1281, 1293, 1299–1300, 1333–4, 1501–2, 1699, 1714–15, 1724, 1743, 1744–5, 1750, 1752, 1759–60, 1764–7, 1771–2, 1773–5, 1779–84, 1797, 1802–3, 1804–7, 1811–13, 1815–16, 1854, 1936–44, 1949–54; Labour Bill, 1019; Labour Federation 1003; Labour Inquiry Committee 1060; labour unrest in tea gardens 1054. *See also* workers' struggle
 Lahiri, Somnath 1051ⁿ², 1555, 1661, 1695
 Lahore Conspiracy Case 1528ⁿ¹, 1565, 1566^{n5,6}
 Lahiry, Ashutosh 1855–6
 Laithwaite, 1402–6
 Lajpat Rai, Lala 1711, 1898ⁿ¹
 Lal Bawta Press Kamgar Union, report of the General Body meeting 1007–8
 Lalji Naranji 1025
 landlords and moneylenders, *See* zamindars
 language issue, 1243, 1360, 1755, 1780, 1858, 1911
 Laski, Harold Joseph 1283
 Latif, Shah Abdul 1908ⁿ⁵
 Latif, Syed Abdul 1768, 1786, 1816–24, 1837–9, 1861
 law and order 1065–6, 1324, 1822, 1782–3
 Leader 1104–5, 1771
 League of Nations 1033, 1424
 League of Radical Congressmen 1544–5, 1631, 1694–5; Conference 1642–3; draft manifesto 1567–71; and Forward Bloc 1612–13
 Left, Leftism 1188, 1192, 1197, 1202, 1203, 1206–7, 1210, 125–16, 1250–2, 1284–6, 1290, 1292, 1294–7, 1299, 1302–3, 1318, 1333, 1348, 1353–4, 1366, 1369–71, 1387, 1406, 1416, 1436, 1472^{ff}, 1890; anti-Left propaganda 1067, 1074; consolidation/unity 1591, 1627–30, 1636–7, 1647, 1651, 1661, 1663–6, 1695, 1634–7, 1687–9;—at Allahabad, 1674–5;—in Maharashtra 1637–8;—organizational form 1635–7; Consolidation Committee (LCC), 1073–4, 1332, 1345, 1656–7, 1663–4, 1673–4; and Muslim League 1107; nationalism 1074, 1700–3, 1709; and the workers' struggle 1010, 1016, 1020–1, 1074
 Legge, Thomas 998
 legislative reforms 1182

- Lenin, Vladimir 1473, 1485, 1487; Leninism 1665
 Lingamurti, K. 1372
 Linlithgow, Lord 985, 1024, 1054, 1506, 1743,
 1744–5, 1748–9, 1752, 1759–60, 1764–7, 1771–2
 local self-government 1453, 1879; democratization
 of 1167; Local Self-Government Act 1326
 Lohia, Rammanohar 1639–42, 1664, 1667–8, 1682,
 1689, 1719–21, 1723, 1728
 London Majlis 1511
 Lotankar, K.G. 1008
 Lothawala, R. 1497
 Lothian, Lord 1405
 Lucknow Electric Supply Works 985
 Lumia, Subhas Mal 1371
 Lumley, Roger 1024, 1815–16
 Lunia, Subhagmal 1346
 Luntamba, A.V. 1516
- Macaulay, Thomas Babington 1360
 Madani, Maulana Husain Ahmad 1242, 1243,
 1246, 1359, 1488, 1929, 1931–2
 Madani, Shaikul Hind Allama 1359
 Madhava Menon, K. 1444–5, 1452
 Madhe-Sahaba controversy, Tabarra 1760, 1777,
 1929–44, 1949–54, 1957
 Madras: Congress Socialist Party (CSP) 1068,
 1368; Estates Land Amendment Act 1293, 1455;
 Hindu Conference 1881; Legislative Council
 1377–8; Port Trust Workers Union 1045; workers'
 struggle/strikes 1052, 1085;—press workers
 1067–8
 Maginots and Siegfrieds in Congress 1719–21
 Mahajan, Madan Mohan 1864
 Mahajan, Suraj Prasad 1864, 1868
 Mahajani, H.R. 1638
 Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee
 (MPCC) 1328–9, 1637; membership 1436–7;
 resolution 1341–4
 Mahapatra, Balai Das, 986
 Maharashtra 1291; Congress membership 1386;
 Congress Socialist Party (MCSP) 1682; Left unity
 1637–8; Provincial Congress Committee 1065,
 1672
 Maheswari Devi Jute Mills 1057, 1110
 Mahmud, Dr 1334, 1780
 Mahmuduzzafar, Syed 1504–7
 Mahomed, Syed 1934
 Mahri, Abdur Roof Khan 1328–9
 Majaz, Israr-ul-Haq 1477, 1716–18
 Majid, Sheikh Abdul 1684, 1754, 1905
 Majlis-i-Ahrar 1239–40, 1253, 1361, 1385, 1429,
 1840; and Ulama Conference 1246–7, 1305–6
 Majumdar, Surash Chandra 1887
- Majumder, Satyen 1478
 Malabar: Aided school teachers 1450–1; Unique
 Youth Movement 1516–17
 Malaviya, Harsha Deo 1554, 1674
 Malaviya, Keshav Dev 1554
 Malaviya, Madan Mohan 1329
 Malaviya, Padmakant 1674–5
 Maliki Code of Law 1255
 Mallikarjuna Rao, B.S. 1372
Mamlatdars 1056, 1097
 Mansur, Ferozuddin 1726
 Mardhi Math 1005–6
 Married Women's Property Act 1226
 Martyn, P.L. 1090
 Marwari Students' Union 1266
 Marx, Marxism 1261, 1473, 1477, 1485, 1582, 1588,
 1665, 1670–1, 1698–9
 Marxist League 1512
 Masani, M.R. 1021, 1488, 1492, 1521–3, 1549–52,
 1664, 1666–8, 1672, 1682, 1689, 1723
 Mashriqi, Inayatullah 1894–5
 Mathuradas 1272
 Mauiyidzada, Begum Sakina F. 1300
 Maxwell & Co 1060, 1695
 May Day message for India 1009–10
 Maynard, Herbert John 1361
 Mazdoor Sabha 1036–7, 1057, 1073, 1077, 1100–1,
 1102, 1103, 1105, 1107, 1108, 1110, 1553, 1658;
 complaint against employers 1058–9
 Mazumdar, Gunada 1532
 Mazumdar, Hemprabha 1301
 Mazumdar, N. Dutt 1051ⁿ
 Mazumdar, Suresh 1594
 McLeod & Co. 996
 medieval mentality 1877–8
 Meerut Conspiracy Case 1007ⁿ, 1033ⁿ, 1524–5,
 1544, 1585ⁿ, 1615, 1686ⁿ, 1615
 Mehdi, Agha 1933
 Mehdi, Hyder 1934
 Meherally, Yusuf 1036–7, 1092, 1102, 1107,
 1243–4, 1488, 1661, 1668–9, 1695
 Mehra, Munshi Hari Krishna 1344
 Mehta, Ashok 1021ⁿ, 1547ⁿ, 1664, 1667, 1672,
 1682, 1689, 1723
 Mehta, Jamnadas M. 1005–7, 1050, 1054, 1661
 Mill Mazdoor Sangh 1344
 Mill-Owners' Association 1090, 1102
 minority communities: grievances 1741, 1743;
 irresponsible and recalcitrant 1346–8;
 representation in Congress 1319–23
 Minto, Lord 1768
 Mirajkar, S.S. 1054
 Mirza, Aziz 1741

- Misra, Bharat 1859
 Misra, D.P. 1751
 Missir, Murli Dhar 986, 988
 Mitakshara 1382
 Mitra, Dulal 1891
 Mitra, Satyendra C. 1887
 Model Mills, Nagpur 1010
 Mohamed Shahid, Maulana 1554
 Mohammad Mian, Maulana 1245
 Mohani, Maulana Hasrat 1693–4, 1766ⁿ¹
 Molotov, M. 1736
 Momin, Abdul 1684
 monogamy 1219, 1226
 Montagu, Edwin 1320, 1413
 Mookherjee, Shyama Prasad 1877, 1898–1900, 1916
 Moonje, B.S. 1853, 1854, 1855, 1858, 1861, 1862–3, 1878–9, 1889, 1902–3, 1905, 1908–10, 1914–15, 1918–19
 Morris, Jan 1866, 1868
 Motilal, G.S. 1223–25
 Mudaliar, Kumaraswami 1056
 Muhammad Ghorī 1924
 Muhammadan Educational Congress 1359
 Muir Mills, Kanpur 1077, 1084, 1102
 Mukerjee, Hiren 1476
 Mukerjee, Sailajananda 1476
 Mukerji, Anil Chandra 1555
 Mukherjee, Baidyanath 1027
 Mukherjee, Bankim 1050, 1051, 1090–2, 1300, 1536, 1594, 1673
 Mukherjee, M.N. 1098, 1915
 Mukherjee, Mani 1051ⁿ¹
 Mukherjee, Manmath Nath 1041, 1098–1100
 Mukherji, Bebesch Chandra 1728
 Mukherji, Jadu Gopal 1594
 Mukherji, Kalipada 1051ⁿ³
 Mukherji, Nanigopal 1051ⁿ²
 Mukherji, Rajni 1051
 Mukherji, S.P. 990
 Mukundan, M. 1446
 Mulji Sicca & Co. 1164
 Munagala Kisan Satyagraha 1463–5, 1714
 Munich Pact (1938) 1262, 1538
 Munshi, K.M., 1005, 1009, 1024, 1056
 Muslim(s) 1142, 1240, 1242, 1252–54, 1273, 1291, 1304, 1305, 1334, 1357, 1387, 1406, 1429–31, 1471, 1481–2, 1503, 1658; attitude in India 1840–3; communication 1886; and the Congress, 1179–80, 1385–6; and day of deliverance 1421–4; duty in crisis 1358–62; education 1769–70, 1849–53; equality, demand for 1813; and federation 1792–4; and the Forward Bloc 1662; Marriage Bill 1254–7; mass contact movement 1208, 1283ⁿ⁴, 1439, 1784; prejudices and ignorance, 1742; press, alleged discrimination 1845–7; satyagraha against Vidya Mandir Scheme 1750–2, 1753–4; social order 1849; Women's Marriage Dissolution Bill 1209–10
 Muslim Conference 1752
 Muslim League 1016, 1051, 1070, 1103–4, 1105, 1106–8, 1194, 1208, 1239–41, 1260, 1281, 1292, 1299, 1304–5, 1306, 1348, 1358, 1360, 1384, 1392, 1405, 1408, 1413, 1430–1, 1471, 1615, 1638, 1658, 1693–4, 1710, 1740, 1741, 1742, 1743, 1744–7, 1748, 1750–1, 1752, 1753, 1754–6, 1757–9, 1761, 1768, 1769, 1772, 1773–4, 1775, 1776–81, 1783–4, 1785–7, 1788–9, 1800, 1801–2, 1803, 1804, 1807, 1808–9, 1811, 1815, 1817, 1820, 1833–6, 1837–42, 1843–5, 1848, 1853, 1862–3, 1864–6, 1878, 1884–5, 1887, 1891–2, 1893–4, 1896, 1902–3, 1905–6, 1908, 1910, 1912–14, 1918–19, 1922–3, 1928, 1930, 1932, 1942, 1944, 1948; allegation made by General Secretary 1873–6;—government's reply to 1867–73; complaint against Bihar Ministry 1754–5; Darbhanga Conference 1824–5; disclaimed by Momins 1415; Jharia meeting 1788–9; Mazdoor Council 1104, 1106; Patna session 1743, 1750; propaganda, demonstration at Allahabad 1797–99; reorganization 1757–9
 Muslim Political Party 1844
 Muslim Students' Conference 1742
 Muslim Welfare League 1179
 Mussolini, Benito 1335, 1492, 1773, 1895
 Mustafa, Nawab 1865
 Mutiny (1857) 989, 1305
 Muttalabi 1477
 Muzaffarpore Momin Conference 1301
 Muzaffaruddin, Syed 1430
 Mymensingh District Congress Committee 1026
 N.S. Railway Employees Union report on the conditions of workers: at Kazipet and Dornkal 1043–4; at Purna and Nizamabad 1046–7
 Nadvi, Mualana Syed Sulaiman 1359
 Nagpur: Muslims and Vidya Mandir Scheme 1750–2; workers' struggle 1010–11, 1016
 Naidu, B. Perumallu 1473
 Naidu, Sarojini 1283, 1557
 Naidu, Subarao 1478
 Naik, Bikal 986
 Naim, Mufti Mohammed 1244–5, 1359
 Nair, Chandroth Kunhram 1516
 Nambi, E. Narayanan 1482
 Nambudiripad, E.M. Sankaran 1445, 1450–2, 1516

- Namus-e-Sahaba 1948
 Nanda, Gulzarilal 1005, 1024, 1083
 Naqi, Mahomed 1933
 Naqvi, Kalb-e-Abbas 1928, 1934
 Narang, Gokul Chand 1882, 1893–8, 1915
 Narashimharao 1465
 Narasimham, K.L. 996–8, 1714
 Narasimhamurti, M 1372
 Narayan, Jayaprakash 985, 1002, 1009–10, 1072–4, 1168ⁿ², 1227–8, 1250–1, 1257, 1488ⁿ¹, 1522, 1532–4, 1550, 1543–4, 1545–7, 1577, 1594, 1610–11, 1622, 1627–8, 1658–9, 1661, 1664, 1668–71, 1673, 1682, 1695
 Narayana Rao, K.V. 1714
 Narayanamurti, G. 1372
 Narayanarao, M., 1461
 Narayanaswamy, C.K. 1376
 Narayanaswamy, M. 1461
 Narendra Nath Das, Raja 1879–80, 1882–4, 1884–7, 1915
 Nariman, K.F. 1251ⁿ¹, 1291, 1352–7, 1370, 1376, 1488ⁿ¹, 1491, 1541, 1594, 1595–6, 1613ⁿ¹, 1627–8, 1661
 National Demand Resolution 1262, 1271, 1275, 1284–5, 1297, 1303, 1325, 1365, 1502, 1507, 1533, 1536, 1537–9, 1544–5, 1548–9, 1551, 1562, 1576, 1581, 1582, 1585, 1601–2, 1627, 1655, 1664, 1710, 1735; *See also* Tripuri
 national movement (freedom struggle) 1019–20, 1061–2, 1168–70, 1192–3, 1233, 1252–4, 1261, 1287, 1345, 1475, 1504, 1518, 1524, 1525, 1567, 1589, 1603, 1605, 1738, 1740, 1761; in Punjab 1208–9; women's role 1280, 1665
 National Planning Committee, 991, 1042, 1351
 National Volunteer Corps 1560, 1573, 1576–7, 1625, 1633, 1669
 nationalism 1074, 1180–3, 1241–3, 1377, 1387, 1688, 1741, 1799, 1856, 1860, 1879, 1886, 1888, 1898, 1928; Hindu 1304, 1912; leftist politics 1074, 1472^{ff}, 1700–3, 1709; Muslim 1395–6, 1412–14; territorial 1923
 Nationalist Muslims' Conference 1412–14
 Navalchand Navalrai 1915
 Nawabali, Syed 1769
 Nazimuddin, Khwaja 1265ⁿ¹, 1503, 1564, 1703, 1748, 1803, 1852ⁿ³
 Nehru Committee 1351
 Nehru, Indira 1945
 Nehru, Jawaharlal 991, 1005ⁿ², 1045, 1050, 1077–8, 1085, 1105, 1109, 1167ⁿ¹, 1180, 1188ⁿ¹, 1192, 1197, 1204, 1206–7, 1208–9, 1214, 1216–18, 1227–8, 1232, 1237, 1247, 1249, 1259ⁿ³, 1260, 1270–71, 1283, 1290, 1292, 1294–5, 1296, 1298, 1306, 1307, 1318, 1319, 1322–3, 1332, 1335, 1338–9, 1342, 1350, 1352, 1368–70, 1375, 1381, 1391, 1403–6, 1408, 1410, 1414, 1415, 1424, 1436, 1469–70, 1472–5, 1480, 1496, 1499, 1501, 1503, 1504, 1522–3, 1526, 1530, 1532, 1540, 1548, 1551, 1560, 1563, 1576, 1579ⁿ¹, 1622, 1638, 1647, 1668, 1672, 1682, 1683–4, 1689–91, 1699, 1673, 1711, 1715, 1724, 1728, 1743, 1814–15, 1829, 1830, 1839–40, 1842, 1847, 1890, 1892, 1910, 1934, 1935–6, 1945, 1946–7, 1948–9, 1952; on Forward Bloc 1614; resignation from Congress presidentship 1217–18; on Socialists 1529
 Nehru, Motilal 1232, 1274, 1320, 1329, 1620
 Nellimarla Labour Union 1372
 Nellore District Congress Committee (NDCC) 1472–4, 1484–6
 Nellore District Congress Socialist Party (NDCSP) 1486
 Nematullah 1786
 new technique of struggle 1604–5, 1643, 1648–9, 1651–2, 1659, 1675, 1691
 New Victoria Mills 1057, 1058, 1094
 Nigam, K. K. 1565
 Nihchaldass 1843–4
 Nili Posh movement 1895
 Nimbkar, R.S. 981, 1030–3, 1727
 9th July demonstrations 1692–3, 1696
 Nizam of Hyderabad 1768, 1925
 Nirmal, O.D. 1046
 Nizamabad: railway workers conditions 1046–7
 Non-Cooperation movement 982ⁿ³, 1004ⁿ², 1385ⁿ¹, 1411, 1413, 1490ⁿ¹, 1493ⁿ², 1494, 1596, 1565ⁿ¹, 1852ⁿ³, 1898ⁿ¹, 1918
 Non-Factory Workers' Conference 985–90
 Non-violence (*ahimsa*) 1180–2, 1085, 1271, 1292, 1323, 1375, 1398, 1456, 1486, 1503, 1505, 1593, 1645, 1662, 1770, 1889, 1902, 1918
 Noon, Malik Firoz Khan 1748, 1752, 1755–6
 Noor, A.A. Mohammad 1051ⁿ¹, 1301
 Nooruddin, K. 1758
 North Calcutta Students' Federation 1260
 North Shamnugger Jute Mill 1028–9
 North West Frontier Province (NWFP), 1299, 1425, 1755; Governor's report 1835
 Nurannabi, A.F.M. 1684
 Nuruddin, Maulana Asad 1245
 O'Dwyer, Michael 1424, 1845
 Obeidullah 1624
 Oil Ordinance 1081
 Old Labour Association 1003
 Oriental Defence Association 1359
 Osmania College 1755

- Pakistan movement 1242, 1745, 1775, 1800, 1805, 1883
 Pal, Bipin Chandra 1711, 1893*n*¹
 Pal, Biren 1051*n*³
 Palestine Conference 1766
 Palestine 1281, 1360
 Panchayats 1774
 Panday, Rajaram 1376
 Pande, D.P. 1554
 Pandya, Girdhar 1595
 Pandya, Rajaram 1595
 Panni, Maulvi Masud Ali Khan 1758
 Pant, Govind Ballabh 1092, 1108–9, 1206, 1207, 1250–51, 1258, 1260*n*¹, 1264, 1266, 1268, 1272, 1275, 1277, 1284, 1290, 1292, 1532–3, 1540–2, 1544–5, 1547–548, 1561, 1563, 1574–5, 1581, 1595, 1653, 1880, 1936*n*¹, 1943, 1946, 1949, 1953–4. *See also* National Demand resolution
 Pantulu, Ramadas 1221
 Pantulu, V.V. Jogiah 1371–2
 Papayya, Immidi 1463–4
 Parandhamayya 1465
 Paranjapye, R.P. 1076, 1320–3
 Paranjpye, D.K. 1345
 Parikh, Narhari 1428–9
 Parliamentaryism, 1653–4, 1675
 Parmanand Rai 988, 1011, 1209–10, 1854, 1861, 1889
 Partition of India 1768–9, 1773
 Parulekar, S.V. 1005, 1049, 1055–6, 1076, 1097
 Pasha, Mustafa Kemal 1589, 1742
 Paswan, Shivanandan 1859
 Patel, Rajani 1727
 Patel, Ranchod 1557
 Patel, Sardar Vallabhbhai 988, 1005, 1025, 1189, 1191*n*³, 1192, 1195–6, 1214, 1232, 1251–2, 1260, 1269–70, 1273, 1287, 1292, 1303, 1322, 1350, 1410, 1427, 1429, 1469, 1538, 1579, 1613, 1678–9, 1687, 1715, 1755, 1830, 1844, 1847, 1946
 Patel, V.J., 1847
 Pathak, Radhe Shiam 1554
 Patil, Jaitu Namaji 1095
 Patil, S.K. 1171, 1431–2, 1468–70
 Patna Mazdoor Union, victory 1029–30
 Patro, A.P. 1221
 Patwardhan, Achyut 1021, 1194, 1488*n*¹, 1546, 1557, 1664, 1667–8, 1672, 1682, 1689, 1723
 Payment of Wages Act 986, 1032
 peasants' and workers 1482, 1640, 1763
 Peasants' Debt Relief Bill 1096–7
 Perfect Pottery Works, Jubbulpore, 1026–27
 Peshawar 1638–9
 Phadke, Ganpatrao 1096, 1097
 Phadke, K.N. 1638
 Phadke, N.W. 1096, 1098
 Phoenix Mill, 1009, 1065; workers answer mill owners' challenge 1033–6
 Pickwick, 1407
 Piggott Committee 1936*n*¹, 1937, 1951
 Pillai, A.K. 1673
 Pirpur, Raja 1769
 Poland 1384, 1833; democracy, 1719
 Police Act 1875, 1930, 1938
 police and military excesses 1052, 1081–2, 1781–2; in Gokak 991–2
 politics 1045, 1175, 1180–3, 1236, 1262, 1270, 1287–8, 1299, 1318, 1335–6, 1348, 1357, 1369, 1581, 1608, 1645, 1653, 1764, 1764–6, 1802, 1841, 1877; political awakening/consciousness 1019–20, 1022, 1166, 1733;—of Indian women 1417–20; political backwardness 1019, 1165; political crisis and duty of Muslims 1358–62; political and organizational issues 1165–6, 1574; political unity, 1664; of Muslim 1773–4
 political prisoners 1601, 1660; of Bengal 1503, 1624, 1675–7, 1687, 1693;—hunger strike, 1680, 1681;—Rajendra Prasad's appeal to give up 1675–6; of Punjab, 1614–15; political prisoner's day 1597–8, 1680, 1686; release, demand of 1676–7, 1681, 1684–6, 1714, 1913
 Pollitt, Harry 1727
 polygamy 1169–70, 1224–26
 Poona Pact 1880
 Pradhan, Sudhi 1478–79
 Prakasam Committee 1455, 1482
 Prakasam, T. 1455, 1483*n*³, 1460–1
 Pramanik, Sudhindra 1011–13, 1039–40, 1081–2, 1260
 Prasad, Shyam Bihari 1174
 Prasadrao 1465
 Prativa Devi 1300
 Press (Emergency Powers) Act 1324
 Prithvi Raj 1924
 Privy Council 1207
 Progressive Writers' Association 1478–9
 prohibition 1056, 1063, 1173, 1181–82, 1340, 1282, 1468, 1687, 1782
 provincial: autonomy 1193, 1575, 1794, 1807, 1818–19, 1840–2, 1883; governments 1230, 1537, 1563, 1648, 1676, 1914; legislatures 1321
 provincialism 1294, 1304
 Public Accounts Committees 1321
 Public Service Commission 1327
 Puckle, F.H., 1221, 1225, 1256
 Pundlik 1006

- Punjab: Congress on Working Committee Resignations 1213–14; Congress Socialist Party 985ⁿ¹; Muslim Students' Federation, 1481–82; premier and Congress 1746–8; Trade Union Congress, resolution 984
- Puranik, Vasant D. 1344–5
- Purna: railway workers conditions 1046–7
- Pyarelal 1211–13, 1487
- Pyne, Barada Prasanna 1596
- Qadri, Afzal Hussain 1769, 1832
- Qayyum, Maulana Abdul 1245–6
- Quit India Movement 1265ⁿ¹, 1266ⁿ³, 1267ⁿ¹ 1446, 1482ⁿ¹, 1490ⁿ¹, 1547ⁿ¹
- racial antagonism 1478
- Radhakrishnan S. 1203–4
- Radical Youths' Association 1578–9
- Rafique 1876
- Raghavendra Rao 1043–4
- Rahim, Abdul 1382–3
- Rahman, Mohammad Abdur 1300, 1445, 1452, 1482
- Rahman, Fazlur 1757
- Rahman, Latifur 1872
- Rahman, M. Bazlur 1850
- Rahman, Maulana Habib-ur 1239–40, 1244, 1246, 1253–54, 1281, 1359
- Rahman, Maulana Hifzur 1244–6, 1306
- Rahman, Mujibur 1684
- Rahman, Zabibur 1357–8
- Rallia Ram, Mrs L.K. 1208–9
- railways: losses 1072; profit 1071–2; system, being used to crush Indian industry 1071, 1073; unions of Bombay 1053–4; workers' fight 1071–3, 1298
- Raina Committee 1008
- Raipur: Congress Socialist Party 1345; District Congress Committee 1328
- Rajagopalachari, C. 1045, 1230, 1323, 1393, 1410, 1411, 1437, 1469, 1551, 1688
- Rajagopalarao, V. 1457
- Rajapalyam Congress Socialist Party Conference 1486
- Rajendra Prasad 1012, 1022, 1037–8, 1039–40, 1041–2, 1082, 1083–4, 1093, 1104, 1189, 1228–30, 1247–8, 1259ⁿ³, 1270, 1290, 1291ⁿ², 1292, 1293, 1294, 1298, 1304–5, 1323–4, 1341, 1346, 1350–7, 1364ⁿ¹, 1374, 1416, 1430, 1444–7, 1450–2, 1455, 1498–9, 1540, 1613, 1614–15, 1652–3, 1671, 1675–6, 1677, 1680–1, 1703, 1785, 1786, 1787, 1808, 1809, 1816–24, 1847, 1875, 1909, 1910, 1943, 1946–7, 1948–9
- Rajkot struggle 1271–3, 1288, 1296, 1302, 1623, 1787
- Rajnandangaon Mill Mazdoor Sangh 1083–4
- Rajwade, Lakshmibai 1379
- Rakesh Mohan 1489
- Rakshit 1327–8
- Ram Nivas 1009
- Ramachandra Rao, N. 1043–4, 1046, 1047
- Ramachandran, G. 1444–7
- Ramakotayya, Pidikiti 1463
- Ramalinga Reddy, C. 1838
- Ramana, S.V. 1483
- Ramanathan, S. 1038, 1446
- Ramaswami Reddiar, Omandur 1377
- Ramaswami, T.T. 1046
- Ramayya, Uppala 1465
- Ramdurg 1633
- Ramiah, K. 1046
- Ramkotewara Rao, K. 1460
- Ranadive, B.T. 1013–18, 1054, 1376, 1492, 1672, 1686, 1700–3, 1760–4
- Ranga, N.G. 1516, 1594, 1724, 1695
- Rangachari 1714
- Rangasayi 1463
- Rashdi, Sayyad Ali Muhammad 1843–5
- Rashiduddin 1489
- Rasul, Ghulam 1876
- Rauf, Abdul 1346, 1371, 1880
- Red Flag Union 1035, 1054, 1056, 1061, 1091–2
- Red Shirts movement 993, 1081, 1246, 1286, 1299, 1624, 1895
- Reform Act 1911
- Rehman, Maulvi Khalilul 1246
- Renaissance Institute 1260
- revolutionary Jacobinism 1583
- Ross, 1938
- Round Table Conferences 1236, 1350, 1393, 1407, 1743, 1790, 1809, 1883, 1954
- rowdyism and its effect 1574–5
- Rowlatt Act 1080
- Roy Chowdhary, Sushil Kumar 1224–6
- Roy, Bidhan Chandra 1204, 1292, 1298, 1350, 1378, 1379ⁿ¹, 1532, 1552ⁿ¹, 1594, 1680, 1887
- Roy, Kiran Shankar 1378–9, 1532
- Roy, M.N. 981, 1050–1, 1175–6, 1177, 1251ⁿ¹, 1258, 1260, 1266, 1303–4, 1357–8, 1373–4, 1376ⁿ¹, 1436, 1497, 1520, 1522, 1524, 1531, 1544–5, 1579–85, 1594, 1631, 1642–3, 1661, 1672–4, 1678–80, 1683, 1686ⁿ¹, 1689, 1693, 1694–5, 1699, 1710, 1711–12, 1715–16, 1718–19, 1724, 1736–7, 1738; on expulsion of Subhash Chandra Bose 1713–14
- Royal Commission of Enquiry 1807
- Royal Commission on Indian Labour 982ⁿ¹, 1031
- Rudra, Kironbala 1082, 1555
- Ruikar, R.S. 1049, 1083–4

Russia: Non Aggression Pact with Germany 1736
Ryots' Association 1462-5

Saadulla, Sayed Muhammad 1442, 1850
Saeed, Maulana Ahmad 1239, 1246
Saeed, Maulana Mohammed 1956
Saeed, Sobhanul Hind Allama Aghmad 1359
Sahai, Govind 1727
Sahai, Raghuvir 1880
Sahani, Balraj 1477
Sahay, Krishnaballabh 1266-7, 1327, 1864, 1866
Sahay, Kuaraandan 1909
Saif, Maulan Abdul Kasim 1246
Saiyed Mohamed Padshah Sahib Bahadur 1225, 1256
Sajjad, Maulana Mohammad 1359
Sajjada Nashin 1895
Sakhalkar, M.B. 1008
Saklatvala, S 1511
Salt Satyagraha movement 982ⁿ³, 1394, 1482ⁿ², 1417, 1488ⁿ¹
Salvation Srmy 1335
Samad, Abdur 1684
Samiullah, Maulana 1246
Samsuddi 1005-6
Sandhurst Committee 1760, 1801
Sane Guruji 1637, 1672
Sangal, Om P. 1554
Sani, Hafiz Muhammad 1786
Sanjeeva Reddy, N. 1452, 1461
Santal Parganas 1327
Sanyal, B.K. 1346, 1371, 1594
Sanyal, Bhupendranath 1674, 1694-5
Sapru, P.N. 1218-25
Sapru, Tej Bahadur, 1200ⁿ¹, 1490ⁿ²
Saptarishi, C.M. 1919
Saran, R.K. 1011
Saraswati Devi 1280
Saraswati, Swami Dayanand 1925-6
Saraswati, Swami Sahajanand 985, 989, 1008, 1028, 1594, 1627, 1695, 1734
Sarda Act. *See* Child Marriage Restraint Act (1939)
Sarda, Har Bilas 1243ⁿ¹
Sardar Akhtar, Begum of Hyderabad 1798
Sardesai, S.G. 1008, 1575, 1588-90, 1594, 1637-8, 1672
Sarkar, Abu Hasan 1684
Sarma, Debeswar 1027
Sarma, R. Mandeswara 1455
Sarma, Siddhinath 1438
Sarma, Surendra 1477
Satakopachari, K. 1456
Sathakopachari, K. 1455

satyagraha movement 989, 1070, 1084, 1196, 1273, 1274, 1303, 1324-5, 1345, 1455, 1457, 1463-5, 1529, 1652, 1662, 1689, 1690, 1733, 1745, 1690, 1883; by women 1364-5
Satyamurti, S. 1045, 1195-6, 1252, 1281-2, 1302, 1330-2, 1437, 1498, 1504, 1619-20
Satyanarayana, K. 994-6, 1465
Satyanarayana, M.V.V. 1372
Satyapal, Dr 1489
Savarkar, V.D. 1804-6, 1855, 1858, 1859, 1860-1, 1877-8, 1880-2, 1889, 1890, 1900, 1913, 1921-3
Sawkars 1095-8
Saxena, Sitaram 1266
Scheduled Castes 1842, 1879-80; special provisions under Poona Pact, 1917
Sea Customs Act 1511, 1616
Self-determination, 1548, 1549, 1907ⁿ⁴
Sen Gupta, Indra Narayan 1891
Sen Gupta, J.M. 1265ⁿ¹, 1371
Sen Gupta, Naresh Chandra 1476
Sen, Deben 1051ⁿ²
Sen, Dhiren, 1594
Sen, Makhan Lal 1661, 1694
Sen, Ranendra Nath 1728
Sen, Samar 1478
Senguntha Mudaliar handloom weavers 1056
separate electorates, abolition, 1282
Shafi, Mohammad 1801
Shah, Maulana S.A. Rauf 1751, 1753-4
Shah, Mehar 1895
Shahidganj affair, Lahore 1841
Shaikh, Tayab Ali 1578-9, 1594
Shakoor, Maulana Abdul 1931-2, 1935, 1945
Shamnagore Jute Workers' Union 1050
Shamsuddin 992, 1758
Shams-uz-Zuha, M. 1875
Shankar, N.B. 1483
Sharleuddin, Malik 1798
Sharma, Balkrishna 983, 1054, 1076, 1078, 1092-5
Sharma, Jadunandan 1074
Sharma, Satyadeo 987
Shastri, Hariharnath 981, 1036, 1092, 1107-9, 1554
Shastri, J.R. 1595
Shastri, Lal Bahadur 1198, 1200
Shastri, Raja Ram 983
Shastri, V.L. 1714-15
Shaw Wallace and Co., Calcutta 1083-4
Shaw, Gopi Nath 986
Shekhar, N.C. 992-4
Shellac Factory 988
Sherwani, Haroon Khan, 1850
Sherwani, Lokman Khan 1555

- Sherwani, Muhammad Habibur Rahman Khan 1848
- Shetty, M.R. 1183–6
- Shetty, Madan 1183–6
- Shias 1742; backwardness in politics 1471; civil disobedience 1940; Shia Political Association 1945; Shia Political Conference 1385ⁿ¹, 1471; and Sunnis conflict 1257, 1292, 1778, 1910, 1928–57
- Shiva Rao 1082
- Sholapur textile workers 1019, 1067, 1076
- Shorish, Agha Abdul Karim 1246
- Shri Nivas Mill, Fergusson Road Zone 1035
- Shuddhi* movement 1886, 1917–18, 1926
- Shukla, Jata Shankar 1078–81
- Shukla, Ram Naresh 1554
- Sibsagar District Congress Committee (SDCC) 1439–40
- Siddiqi, Maulana Abdul Halim 1244–5
- Siddiqi, Maulana Ghulam 1429–30
- Siddiqi, Mohamed Asghar 1770
- Siddiqui, Abdur Rahman 1421, 1431, 1766–7, 1773, 1830
- Sil, Lakshmi Kanta 1266
- Silk industry in Bombay 1039
- Silk Letter conspiracy 1246ⁿ⁵
- Silk Mill Workers' Union, Bombay 1039
- Simi, Mohd. 1110
- Simon Commission 1911; Boycott movement 1487, 1488ⁿ¹
- Sind: Ministry and Congress 1843–5; Muslims 1905; Provincial Congress Committee 1357
- Sindhi, Maulana Ubaidullah 1245, 1306–7
- Singh, Babu Ram Narayan 1022
- Singh, Bhagat 1528ⁿ¹, 1565ⁿ¹
- Singh, Bishundeo Narain 1873
- Singh, Chandra 1686
- Singh, Deep Narayan 1267
- Singh, Gurmukh 1565, 1686
- Singh, Hazar 1047
- Singh, Jageshwar 1174
- Singh, Jaipal 1325–8, 1334, 1489
- Singh, Jasbir 1929–33, 1944, 1945, 1947–8
- Singh, Narmada Prasad 1715–16, 1718–19
- Singh, Prem Sagar 987
- Singh, Ram 1565
- Singh, Ramcharita 1174
- Singh, Ramnarayan 1174, 1266–7
- Singh, Rampadarath 1174
- Singh, S. Sampuran 1213
- Singh, Sardar Jamait 1594
- Singh, Thakur Ram 1438
- Singh, Thakur Ramnandan 1267
- Sinha, Kishori 1673
- Sinha, Shri Krishna 1325, 1345, 1754–5
- Sircar, Jogen 1051ⁿ¹
- Sircar, N.N. 1278–9
- Sircar, Nalini Ranjan 1532
- Sitarammayya, B. Pattabhi, 1188, 1190, 1192, 1194, 1197, 1201–03, 1208, 1216, 1231–2, 1452, 1456, 1461, 1474, 1485–7, 1488, 199, 1500
- Skeen, Andrew 1802ⁿ²
- Smith, Conran 1409
- Smith, W.C. 1247ⁿ¹, 1301ⁿ²
- social: conscience 1168; justice 1478; legislation 1062–3, 1066, 1168, 1222; order 1242, 1336, 1475; reforms 1399, 1733
- socialism, Socialists 1020–1, 1061, 1068, 1103, 1105, 1180, 1192, 1213, 1261, 1292, 1295, 1297, 1302, 1319, 1365, 1368, 1445, 1483, 1504–6, 1508, 1521–3, 1529, 1534, 1539, 1540–2, 1546–7, 1557, 1559–60, 1567, 1575, 1578, 1579–80, 1591, 1603, 1625, 1636–7, 1651, 1664–7, 1688–9, 1673, 1691, 1702–3, 1709–10, 1712, 1714, 1724, 1727; and Communist unity 1072–4, 1532–4, 1637, 1664, 1698–1700; for composite leadership 1674; and Congress 1715; and left nationalism 1700–3; initiative to national unity 1695–1700
- Somasundaram, V.S. 1484
- Someswara Rao, S. 1556
- Sorensen, R.W. 1283
- South Kanara Students' Conference 1585–7
- Soviet Union: Communist Party 1621
- Spain 1498, 1538
- Special Marriage Act 1219–20, 1222
- Sree Sangha 1594
- Sri Prakasa 1368–70
- Srinivasa Rao, A.B. 1368, 1704, 1715
- Srirangasayi 1464
- Srivastava, Jwala Prasad 1807, 1080, 1855, 1862
- Standard Mill, Wadi Zone 1035
- Standard Jute Mill, Titagarh 990–1
- states issue 1206–7
- Stevenson, Mr 1046
- Subba Rao, B. 1046, 1068
- Subba Rao, K. 995, 997
- Subbarayan, Mrs 1169–70
- Subjects Committee of the Conference 983–4
- Subrahmanyam, Erneni 1462
- Succession Act 1220
- Suhrawardy, H.S. 1848
- Sukkur riots 1904–8, 1914–15, 1919
- Sukul, Deben 1051
- Sun Yat Sen 1525
- Sundarayya, P. 1472–4, 1484–7, 1557, 1714
- Sunil, Dr 1212, 1268–9
- Sunnis 1777–8; civil disobedience movement 1932–3, 1939–40. *See also* Shias

- Surat imbroglio 1231
 Surma Valley Youth Congress 1520
 Swadeshi Cotton Mills 1102
 Swadeshi Mills, Kanpur 1077
 Swadeshi movement 1173, 1187, 1237, 1860; in Bengal 1267
Swaraj 1003, 1080, 1236, 1239, 1262, 1280, 1289, 1298, 1663, 1863, 1888
 Swaraj Party 1003, 1329, 1591, 1620, 1620, 1712
 Syed, G.M 1905
 Sylhet Mahila Sangha 1617–18
- Tabarra agitation. *See* Madhe-Sahaba controversy
 Tabligh al-Islam 1896
 Tagore, Rabindranath 1237, 1334–8, 1476, 1557, 1586, 1594, 1854, 1911
 Tagore, Surendranath 1334–8
 Tahafuz-e-Millat 1929
 Talati, Gokuldas 1491
 Taldeokar, G.R. 1039
 Tamil Nadu: Congress Socialist Party (CSP) 1052;—and Forward Bloc 1704–5; Provincial Congress Committee (TNPCC) 1377, 1484
 Tandon, Purushottam Das 1198, 1200, 1490
 Tanzeem-ul-Momineen 1929, 1945
 Tata Centenary Celebrations 1003–4
 Tata Hydro-Electric Companies 998, 1000
 Tata Iron and Steel Company 1003–4, 1043
 Tata, J.N. 1004
 Tatyrao 1889
 taxation, taxation policy 1025, 1056, 1063, 1782; property taxes 1063
 Tea Gardens Labour Enquiry Committee 1027
 Tejpur District Congress Committee (TDCC) 1439
 Telinipara trade union struggle 1017
 Tenancy Act 1175, 1359
 Tenancy Bill 1056
 Tewary, Ramesh Chandra 1266
 textile industry 1032, 1066, 1069–70, 1094, 1632; crisis in India 1037–8, 1061–3
 Textile Inquiry Committee 1024, 1062–3, 1065, 1512
 Textile Labour Association (TLA) 1037*n*²
 Thana, S.P. 1055–6
 Thanwi, Maulana Asharf 1359
 Thorne, J.A. 1383
 Tilak, Bal Gangadhar 1711, 1863*n*¹, 1921*n*¹
 Tilak Swaraj Fund 1267
 Tiwari, B.P. 1205
 trade depression 1062–3
 Trade Disputes Act 1099, 1601
 Trade Disputes Bill 1008, 1512
 trade unions, trade union movement 981, 990, 991, 1004, 1010, 1014–21, 1030–2, 1043, 1064, 1066, 1073, 1084, 1103, 1105, 1107, 1262, 1319, 1332, 1451, 1505, 1509, 1524, 1531–2, 1544, 1589, 1605, 1607, 1617, 1620, 1647, 1653, 1701, 1729, 1763; membership, 1014–15;—women 1380–1; trade union policy 1013–18
 Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union, 993
 Tricmjee, Mathooradas 1469
 Trilokri case of Hazaribagh 1754
 Tripathi, S.P. 1052
 Tripathi, Vishambhar Dayal, 1198, 1200, 1729
 Tripuri Session of Congress, 1175–76, 1189, 1214–15, 1228–29, 1230, 1231–3, 1243, 1248–50, 1251–2, 1257–9, 1261, 1264–5, 1269, 1275–6, 1284–5, 1287, 1289–90, 1292, 1294–7, 1298 1345, 1365, 1452, 1469, 1472, 1483, 1484, 1488, 1492, 1494, 1498, 1503, 1518, 1521, 1526, 1531, 1532–4, 1544–5, 1547, 1558–9, 1562–4, 1567, 1571, 1577–8, 1580, 1588, 1590, 1601–2, 1608, 1614, 1617, 1622, 1623, 1626, 1634, 1655, 1663, 1667–9, 1695, 1700, 1710, 1712, 1736, 1760; Bengal, reactions in 1260, 1265–6; a class approach 1643–7; Communists at, Communists role, 1534–6, 1571–8; elections, 1183–86; happenings, 1264–5; left, role, 1552–53; national demand resolution, 1537–9; political advance 1542–3; political evaluation 1539–3; Presidential address 1261–4; a review, 1558–64; socialists, role 1549–52
 Turkistan–Russia pact 1079
- Umair, Shah Muhammad 1786
 unemployment 983, 990, 1023–4, 1031, 1041, 1048–9, 1058–9, 1063, 1065, 1070; insurance 1049, 1061; Provision Convention 1031
 Union North Jute Mills, Beliaghata 1300
 Unionist Party 1746, 1748
 United Hindu Bengal Party 1881
 United National Front (UNF) 1010, 1019, 1101, 1102, 1105, 1108, 1110–11, 1210, 1216, 1227, 1249, 1348, 1504, 1507, 1508, 1510–1, 1513, 1525, 1532, 1552, 1575, 1580–2, 1604, 1634–5, 1637, 1669, 1708
 United Party 1844
 United Patriotic Association 1359
 United People's Front 985
 United Provinces 1103, 1725, 1729–30; communal situation/communal politics 1745, 1759–60, 1771–2, 1779–80, 1859; Congress membership 1467–8; government and Cawnpore 1082–3; labour disputes 1085; national politics 1204, 1207, 1219, 1291; Political Conference, Fyzabad (1938) 1176–9; Provincial Congress Committee 1057, 1176–79, 1245, 1369, 1408, 1449, 1736; —Constitution Sub-Committee, 1177–78;

—M.N. Roy's resignation from 1436;—Report 1198-1200; Provincial Trade Union Conference 983-4;—Working Committee, anti-communist circular denounced 1052-3
 untouchables 1181, 1288, 1401, 1503, 1732
 Usman, Maulana Hazi Md. 1301
 Usmani, Maulana Shabbir Ahmad 1244
 Usmani, Shah Matinuddin 1798

 Vakil, Afsar Husain 1933, 1934
 Vallabha Rao, D.S. 1463
 Varkey, C.J. 1586
 Vasanti Devi 1595
 Vasudevan, J.P. 1046
 Vasudevarao 1462-3, 1556
 Venkata Raju, M. 1457
 Venkata Rao, K. 1452-3
 Venkata Rao, P. 1372
 Venkata Reddi, K. 1460
 Venkatappayya 1462-4
 Verma, Shiv 1565
 Viceroy Mills, Kanpur 1077
 Victoria Jute Mills 1013, 1050, 1076-8; stiff picketing 1057-8
 Vidarbha Congress Committee 1194-5
 Vidya Mandir Scheme of education 1243, 1745-6, 1750-2, 1753-4
 Vidyarthi, Ganesh Shankar 1395
 Vijay Mills, Bombay 1039
 Village Self Help Scheme 1428
 Vyas, Mohan Lal 1266

 Wadia, P.A. 1839
 Wadud, Maulvi A 990
 wages: cuts, 1064-6, 1070, 1094;—unauthorized 1158, 1162; living wage standard 1000-1, 1002, 1011, 1017, 1023, 1061, 1063; piece-wage system 992-3; Wage Fixation Board 1093
 Wakis 1105
 Wahiuddin, Maulana 1798
 Wakankar, S.G. 1007-8
 Wali, Chennappa 1484
 Walker, G.D. 1098, 1100
 war 1669, 1708, 1735, 1811; and Indian crisis 1469, 1632-3, 1648; and states 1649
 Wardha scheme of education 1243, 1475, 1769, 1848, 1851
 Warrior, K.K. 994
 Warsi, Ashiq 1870, 1872
 Waziristan 1281, 1360
 Weimer Republic 1321
 Wellesley, Arthur, Duke of Wellington 1360
 West Kistna District Congress Committee 1454
 Whittaker 1865, 1871, 1873

Widow Remarriage Act 1169
 Wire Products Company, Jamshedpur 1047
 women, womanhood 1168-70, 1186-7; and communal unity 1420; legal disabilities 1169; liberties and communism 1379-80; membership in trade unions 1380-1; need of education 1279-80; political awakening 1417-20; workers 999, 1032;—dismissed 1300-01
 Wootwalis, Nandlal 1266
 workers, workers': Compensation Act 1016, 1032; and Congress 1006, 1008, 1009, 1036, 1043, 1052, 1056-61, 1063, 1065-6, 1074, 1075-6, 1080-2; politicization 1020; retrenchment 996, 1044, 1049-51, 1057-8, 1072, 1078, 1091-2, 1094, 1115, 1119-20, 1124-6, 1133, 1141-2, 1145-8, 1150, 1152, 1156, 1161, 1163; right to strike 1011-12; struggle 981ff, 1477, 1508, 1649, 1702, 1717; uniform labour policy 1059-61; working conditions 998, 1001-2, 1030-1, 1058
 World Peace Conference 1475
 World War II 1287-8, 1297-8, 1447, 1634
 World Youth Congress 1475
 Wylie, Curzon 1804
 Wylie, Francis 1854

 Yadava, Ramkrishna 1174
 Yajnanarayan, V. 1457
 Yakub, Mohammad 1254, 1256, 1743-4, 1773-4, 1784
 Young Workers' League 1512
 Youth League 1673
 Yusuf, Muhammad 1802-3
 Yusuf, S.S. 1554

 Zafar-ul-Mulk, Maulana 1872, 1931-2, 1935
 Zafrullah 1775, 1806
 Zaheer, S.H. 1610
 Zaheer, S.S. 1554
 Zaheer, Saiyid Ali 1934, 1950
 Zaheer, Sajjad 1477, 1667-71, 1673, 1674, 1716-18
 Zakir Hussain Committee 1475
 Zakiuddin 1832
 Zaman, A.M.A. 1040ⁿ, 1051
 zamindari and capitalist systems 986-9, 1029, 1080, 1184, 1360, 1455-6, 1463-5, 1601, 1623, 1630, 1728; abolition 1022ⁿ
 Zamiruddin Fauz (workers' volunteer corps) 1069-70
 Zeba, Hakim Ahmad Rashid 1305
 Zetland, Lord 1054, 1080, 1203-4, 1230, 1293, 1299-1300, 1385, 1424-5, 1506, 1760, 1764-7, 1773, 1774-5, 1788, 1789-90, 1792, 1794, 1797, 1802-3, 1804-6, 1811-13, 1918
 Zulu Rebellion 1394

Cont'd from front flap

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MUSHIRUL HASAN, Padma Shri, is currently Vice-Chancellor and Professor of modern Indian history, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He has held visiting professorships at the universities of Rome, Virginia, Hungary and at the Maison Des Sciences De L'Homme, Paris as well as the International Institute of Languages and Civilizations, INALCO, Paris. One of the foremost scholars of modern South Asian and partition history, his publications include *The Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence* (1997), *Pluralism to Separatism: Qasbas in Colonial Awadh* (2004), and *A Moral Reckoning: Muslim Intellectuals in Nineteenth Century* (2006).

SABYASACHI BHATTACHARYA is currently Chairman of Indian Council of Historical Research. Formerly Professor of Indian Economic History at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Vice-Chancellor, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, he has held teaching and research appointments at the University of Chicago, St. Antony's College, Oxford, and El Colegio University, Mexico. He is also Chairman, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. His latest publications are *Mahatma and the Poet: Debates Between Gandhi and Tagore* (2002), *Vande Mataram: The Biography of a Song* (2004).

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